

川上 稔

イラスト・さとやす (TENKY)

GENESISシリーズ

境界線上の ホライゾン

IV 上

電撃文庫



GENESISシリーズ
境界線上のホライゾンⅣ(上)

武田との歴史再現のため三方ヶ原の戦いに臨んだ武蔵。だが、強引な解釈による羽柴の登場により初めての敗北を喫してしまった。そして今、武蔵は関東IZUMOの巨大な浮きドック“有明”で大改修を受けていた。

そんななか、関東の北に存在する奥州列強——伊達、最上、上越露西重との協働について、武蔵は模索を始める。しかし、各勢力もそれに対し動き始め……。

様々な過去と思惑を秘めた奥州列強と、果たして武蔵はどのように向き合っていくのか——?

各国に分割統治された中世の神州・日本を舞台に繰り広げる、壮大な戦国学園ファンタジー、第4話ついにスタート!



川上 稔

イラスト:さどやす

か-5-37



GENESISシリーズ
境界線上のホライゾンⅣ(上)

川上 稔

電撃文庫
810



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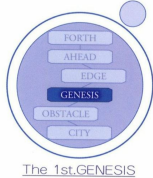
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川上 稔

1975年1月3日生まれ。東京出身。本作のアニメ化に伴い、シナリオやデザイン設定チェックなど数多くの作業が舞い込み、まさに日夜を問わず奮闘中。ちゃんと寝て下さいね(苦笑)。

【軍事文庫作品】
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境界線上のホライゾン I～III
境界線上のホライゾンⅣ(上)

【軍事の単行本】
連射王(上)(下)

イラスト:さどやす(TENKY)

山形生まれの栃木育ち。「すっぱ党なのでシャベットのアイスマッチも嫌えないかなーもしくはコーラ味」でも今年はビノの勝利願がアタリっすよ。

カバー/堀田真

horizon

on the Middle
of Nowhere
episode.04





Installation

installation

■伊達・成実■

史実では「なるみ」じゃなくて、「なりきね」でもなくて「しげさね」です。地味に読みにくい武將名でいうたら結構な上位に入るんじゃないでしょうか。

成実ほ、史実では政宗の一下下。それゆえに正侍として、義兄弟のような育てられ方をしたというのが通説ですが、実際のところは定かではないとされています。武勇に優れた人だったため、鑑別の前立には有名な「百足」の地位がついています。毛虫か百足かは判断が分かれるところですが、どちらにしろ「後退しない」という意味で、その証のよう、に、伊達軍の戦をつとめたり、戦地を救ったりという人です。政宗に仕えるようになってからは、文筆の役に出てもいます。

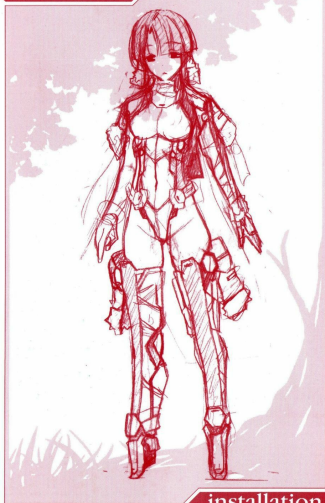
ただ、成実の生涯には一つの謎があります。一五九三年前後に、理由不明の出家で伊達家を捨て、城まで放棄して行方不明となるのです（諸説有り）。他のスカウトなどを断りつつ、しかし彼が暗殺するのは間々原の頃。何があったかは、成実についてのミステリーですね。

作中では「不転百足」を用いる三年生。間諜と両腕が異体となっています。これは「不転百足」の戦闘術などへの対応がありますが、詳細は今後の巻にて、という感じ。出家の意味も「鎌倉」という部分で起え、ちょっと気難しいような、しかし最後には仲間思いの異母。そんなイメージで描いて貰っています。

(川上柳)

installation

installation



installation

Date Narumi

Historically, the name's reading was not Narumi or even Narizane. It was Shigezane.

His name probably ranks pretty high when it comes to difficulty to read.

Shigezane was historically one year younger than Masamune.

The accepted theory is that they were raised like stepbrothers since Shigezane was Masamune's attendant, but it is not actually known for sure.

Because he was a skilled warrior, he had the famous centipede design on the front of his helmet.

Some say it was a caterpillar instead of a centipede, but either one referred to the fact that he never retreated. And to prove it, he served as the rear guard of the Date army, saved them from some tight spots, and did lots of other things too.

Once he was able to serve Masamune, he left for the Bunroku Campaign.

But there is one mystery about Shigezane's life.

At around 1593, he abandoned the Date clan, even abandoned his castle, and disappeared. (There are a number of theories.) He refused the other clans that tried to recruit him, but he returned in time for Sekigahara.

What happened there is a real mystery when it comes to Shigezane.

In Horizon, Narumi is a third year that uses the Unturning Centipede.

Both her arms and both her legs are prosthetics.

This is partially to allow her to fight using the Unturning Centipede, but the details will be revealed in a later book.

I interpreted her flight as a sort of admonition and drew her as something of a hard to please warrior that ultimately cares for her comrades.

(Kawakami Minoru)

**Kyoukai Senjou no Horizon - Horizon on the
Middle of Nowhere - 4A**



——大丈夫かな。

IV

上

川上 稔

イラスト・さとやす (TENKY)

—Will we be okay?

Characters



名: 伊達・政宗

属: 仙台伊達教導院

役: 総長兼生徒会長

種: 全方位武術師

特: 病弱年下梓



2

character

名: 伊達・成実

属: 仙台伊達教導院

役: 副長

種: 全方位機殻師

特: 冷静女?

Name: Date Masamune

Faction: Sendai Date Academy

Position: Chancellor and Student Council President

Style: Strike Master

Special: Sickly Younger Girl

Name: Date Narumi

Faction: Sendai Date Academy

Position: Vice Chancellor

Style: Cowling Master

Special: Composed Girl?

World

・ 『伊達家』 ・

伊達家は奥州東部を治める極東勢力である。

西に最上、南に関東諸家と

上杉（上越露西亞）が

存在し、

特に最上勢との衝突が

絶えない状態にあった。

大事



名: 不破・光治



4

world



当主の伊達・政宗は
竜神の力を宿している
と言われるものの、
最上家との闘争で
捕虜となった父を
見殺しにしたことから、
母、義姫との仲が
不破に。

やがて弟の小次郎を
義姫が嫡男に推す
動きが生まれ、
政宗は小次郎の自害
を命じる事となる。

そして伊達家は、羽柴の時代には形なりの臣従をし、
羽柴の死後は最上共々松平側についた。

関ヶ原の後、最上が衰退するのとは別に、

伊達家は松平側から
認められ、奥州霸王
の地位を得るのである。

大事!

名: ガルーダ

Date Clan

The Date Clan is a Far Eastern power ruling eastern Oushuu. ← Important

Mogami is to the west while the Kantou clans and Uesugi (Sviet Rus) are to the south.

Their conflicts with the Mogami forces never seem to end.

Name: Fuwa Mitsuharu

Map:

Upper right: Date

Upper left: Mogami

Middle right: Mito

Middle left: Uesugi (Sviet Rus)

Bottom right: Edo Bay

Bottom left: Kantou Clans

Their leader, Date Masamune is said to contain the power of the Dragon God, but her relationship with her mother, Yoshihime, has been rocky ever since letting her father die after he was taken prisoner in a battle with the Mogami clan.

Eventually, her mother started supporting her younger brother Kojirou to succeed the clan, so Masamune ordered Kojirou to commit suicide.

And during Hashiba's era, the Date clan became a vassal in name only and joined Matsudaira along with Mogami after Hashiba's death. ← Important!

After Sekigahara, Mogami began to decline, but the Date clan was accepted by

Matsudaira and was given the right to rule Oushuu.

Name: Garuda

Koumon Walker

■特集記事「コーモン様の来襲肉料理18」



『このお店、食べても
食べても御肉が尽きせんのだ！
素晴らしい挑戦ですわ！』

解りやすい悪夢が始まった……。そう、俺達
水戸料理人協会の恐れるべきは領主様の期待に
応えられないことではなく、応えすぎちゃって
手加減知らぬ状況になることで、上機嫌の領主様
は後からついてきた欠食野郎共にも「存分に
お楽しみ下さいませ！」をやってしまうので

つまりこの店「極楽亭」
は本気で極楽行きで、
また来襲〜。

御領主様厳選リンク

怖くないですよ総長連合
生徒会だぎゃあああ！
不定期俺ドライバー（仮）
武蔵de人狼騎士日記
水戸料理人協会
水戸商工人協会
水戸納豆人協会
きみとあさまで
現役娘濃縮還元
Loup de Parfum
壁に耳あり障子に



第3103292号

小論

「納豆混ぜの時間に
匂いが漂う風納豆の
季節に候……」



従士様のスイーツあいたあー判定！

今回は「水戸の梅エクレア」です。

『うあー！ すば、ウマ、ウバー！ すま、
あああああってかおおおおきたきたきたきたあ』

- ・美味度： あいたたたあー！
- ・スパ度： あいたたたたたたたあー！
- ・水戸度： あいたたたたたたたあー！
- ・総合： あいたたたたたたたあー！

Upper Right: Koumon Walker
Top: Special Article “Meat Recipe 18 for Koumon-sama’s Invasion”

Below title:

Issue 3103292

Short Article

“The season of the natto wind has arrived when the smell of natto fills the air at natto mixing time...”

Center article:

“No matter how much you eat here, the meat keeps coming! Such a wonderful challenge!”

An obvious nightmare has begun... Yes, what we in the Mito Cooking Guild fear most is not being unable to fulfill our lord’s expectations. It is to fulfill them so much that she doesn’t know when to stop. And when she gets in a good mood, she tells the starving people following her around to enjoy themselves, so this restaurant, the Paradise, might just be on its way to paradise for real. See you next invasion!

Lower right:

The Vassal’s “Owww” Sweets Review!

She’ll be reviewing the Mito Plum Éclair.

“Wowww! It’s so sour and so delicious! It’s sourlicious! Or delisour! Ahhhh, here it comes, comes, comes, comes!”

Deliciousness: Ow ow owwww!

Sourness: Ow ow ow ow ow ow ow owwww!

Mitones: Ow ow ow ow ow owwww!

Overall: Ow ow ow ow ow ow owwww!

Lower left:

Links Chosen by our Feudal Lord We're the Chancellor's Officers and We Swear
We Aren't Scary We're the Student Council!

Irregularly Updated Me Driver (Tentative Title) Journal of the Werewolf Knight
in Musashi Mito Cooking Guild

Mito Commerce and Industry Guild Mito Natto Guild

Kimitoasamade

Condensed Return of a Woman Who's Still Got It Loup de Parfum

The Eyes Have Walls

The Story So Far

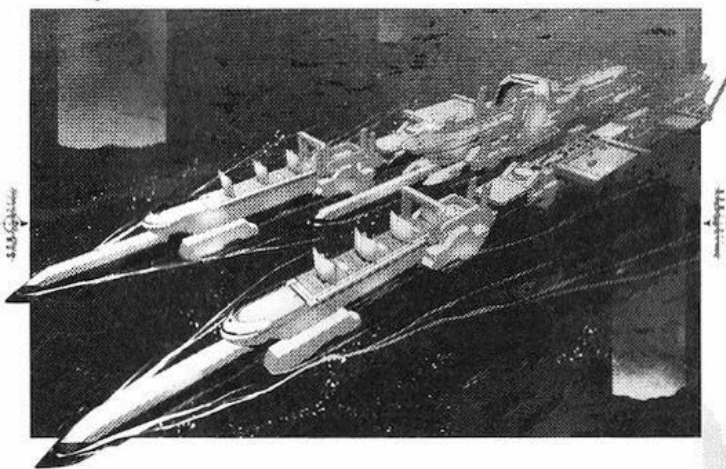
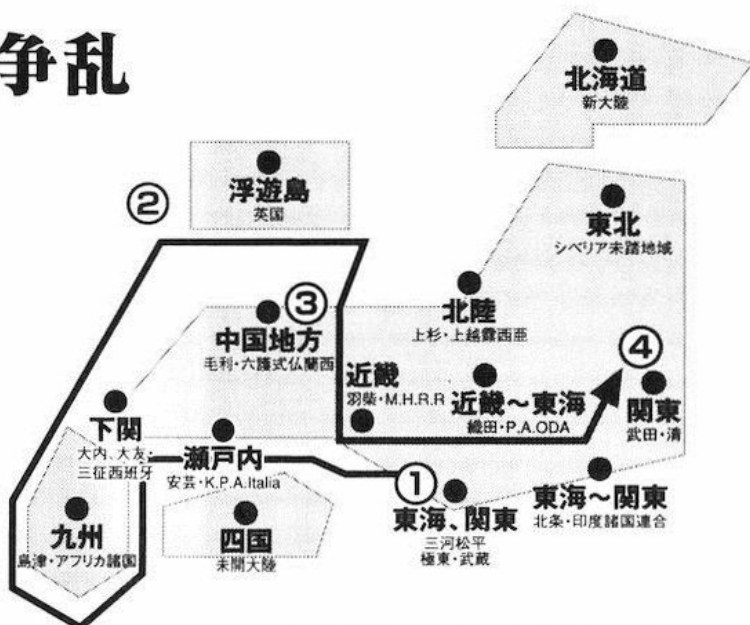
『ここまでのあらすじ』

①:1上下:三河争乱

遠い未来の地球。再び天に昇るため、歴史を繰り返す人々の物語。

重奏世界崩壊の責任ゆえ暫定支配を受ける極東で、三河の松平・元信が、三河の消失ドカンと引き替えに末世解決方法として大罪武装の回収を提示した。しかし大罪武装は彼の実娘ホライゾン・アリアダストの感情をベースとしており、聖譜連盟の代表である教皇総長は彼女の死刑による大罪武装の回収と極東の安定を狙う。

極東、武蔵アリアダスト学院の総長兼生徒会長、葵・トーリは、貧乳副会長である本多・正純や他外道な連中の協力を得て、世界征服宣言したりエロ不注意でホライゾンを救い出したり、大罪武装の一つ“悲嘆の怠惰”を回収する。



②:2上下:アルマダ海戦

味方を得るため、英国に向かった武蔵は、そこで女王エリザベスの姉メアリの処刑と、英国対三征西班牙の決着となるアルマダ海戦に関わっていくこととなる。正純が英国に設けられた“花園”で人工末世を確認する一方、地味忍者である点蔵が噛みコクリでメアリを未来嫁にする。そしてアルマダ海戦を何とか勝利した武蔵は、立花夫妻とメアリを仲間に加え、“拒絶の強欲”を回収。補修のために六護式仏蘭西北岸の浮上島 IZUMOへと向かった。



Introduction

Introduction

③:3上中下:IZUMO ~マクデブルク~三方ヶ原の戦い

IZUMOにて関東勢力の代表と合流した武蔵は、松平最大の敗戦となる三方ヶ原の戦いを談合で済ませる算段をつけてラッキーなところにM.H.R.R.旧派と六護式仏蘭西の艦隊が乗り込んできましたよ。六護式仏蘭西の毛利・元就と全裸太陽の攻撃をジャンケンダッシュでしのいだ所、人狼女王であったミトカーチャンにトーリが捕らえられてミトツダイラが超敗北。本土にミトカーチャンを追うメアリとミト子、ナイト達はカーチャンの捕食合体の話を聞きつつ彼女と協働。K.P.A.Italiaが羽柴の手に落ちる頃、武蔵の向かったマクデブルクへと行く彼らは、その途中でM.H.R.R.皇帝ルドルフ二世を覚醒ミト子が開きにしてカルロス五世のメモを得た。

マクデブルクでは前六護式仏蘭西総長アンヌ達と羽柴を滅ぼす約束をとりつける武蔵だが、そこに柴田勢の侵攻が始まり、竜脈炉の回避としてアンヌが去っていく。ミト子は母に判定勝ちする一方。三方ヶ原の戦は羽柴勢の介入によって談合が破棄。松永、義経、そして里見・義頼という犠牲を払った上で、江戸まで失った武蔵は、避難していた有明と合流するも最大の敗戦を得たのである。



④:これから

現在は水戸上空。有明内部に武蔵はいる。

1: Volume 1-A&B: The Mikawa Incident

The stage is earth in the distant future. The story is mankind repeating history in order to once more ascend to the heavens.

In the Far East which has been put under provisional rule to take responsibility for the collapse of the harmonic world, Mikawa's Matsudaira Motonobu destroyed Mikawa in an explosion, but also gave gathering the Logismoi Óplo as a method of ending the Apocalypse. But the Logismoi Óplo are based on the emotions of Horizon Ariadust, his daughter, and the pope-chancellor and representative of the Testament Union attempted to gather those Logismoi Óplo and stabilize the Far East with her execution.

Aoi Toori, chancellor and student council president of the Far East's Musashi Ariadust Academy, gained the cooperation of flat-chested Vice President Honda Masazumi and some other horrible people, rescued Horizon with a declaration of world domination and sexual carelessness, and retrieved Lype Katathlipse, one of the Logismoi Óplo.

Map: [See Volume 3-A's Introduction Pages]

2: Volume 2-A&B: The Armada Battle

To gain an ally, Musashi made its way to England and got involved with the execution of Mary, sister of Queen Elizabeth, and the armada battle that would settle the conflict between England and Tres España. While Masazumi checked on the artificial Apocalypse constructed in England's Avalon, the plain ninja Tenzou stumbled over his confession and made Mary his future wife. And after Musashi somehow achieved victory in the armada battle, they added the Tachibana couple and Mary to their group and retrieved Aspida Phylargia. They then started toward Hexagone Française's floating island of IZUMO for repairs.

3: Volume 3-A,B,C: IZUMO to Magdeburg to the Battle of Mikatagahara

After meeting with representatives of the Kantou forces in IZUMO, Musashi was preparing to settle the Battle of Mikatagahara, one of Matsudaira's greatest

defeats, in a discussion, but M.H.R.R. Catholic and Hexagone Française fleets attacked them. After using a rock-paper-scissors dash to escape an attack by Hexagone Française's Mouri Terumoto and nudist sun, the Reine des Garous aka Mito's mom captured Toori and super defeated Mitotsudaira. Mary, Mito, Naito, and maybe someone else pursued Mito's mom on the surface, but they ended up joining forces with her after hearing about her predatory docking story. Around when K.P.A. Italia fell to Hashiba, they were on their way to Magdeburg where the Musashi was headed. On the way, Awakened Mito ripped open M.H.R.R Emperor Rudolf II and obtained Carlos V's memo.

In Magdeburg, Musashi promised previous Hexagone Française Chancellor Anne that they would defeat Hashiba, but then Shibata's forces started to attack and Anne passed away to avoid a dragon line reactor. Meanwhile, Mito's mother decided Mito had defeated her. Hashiba's interference ruined any plans of settling the Battle of Mikatagahara with a discussion. After Matsunaga, Yoshitsune, and Satomi Yoshiyori were sacrificed, Musashi even lost Edo and suffered its greatest defeat while meeting up with the Ariake which had evacuated.

4: From Now On

The Musashi is currently inside Ariake above Mito.

Far Eastern History

極東史

AIR-L.A.D.U.S.T.

始めに

極東においてあっちの方とか
どんな人がいてハチャイでいたのか
それを学ぶ助けになれば幸いだったり



IV(上)

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イラスト：さとやす (TENKY)
カバーデザイン：渡辺宏一 (2725 Inc)
本文デザイン原案：TENKY

First of all

In the Far East, did anyone get excited

Wondering what kind of people lived in some other place?

Hopefully, learning that will be of some help

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Book Design Concept: TENKY

Characters

● 武蔵

 <p>葵・喜美 トリーの姉でエロとダンスの神を信仰する。基本的に高圧で応用的に身勝手。</p>	 <p>葵・トーリ 主人公。武蔵アリアダスト学院の総長兼生徒会長。“不可能男”。</p>
 <p>浅間・智 武蔵の主社である浅間神社の娘。トリーや喜美の幼馴染み兼人生の被害者。</p>	 <p>あずま 東 帝の子供で半神。能力など全て封じられて武蔵で生活する。</p>
 <p>アデーレ・バルフェット 仏蘭西から流れてきた従士家系。眼鏡娘。</p>	 <p>伊藤・健児 快活なインキュバス。全裸で禿のマッスル系。通称イトケン。</p>
 <p>御広敷・銀二 ハート様系体格の食通でオタク。</p>	 <p>キヨナリ・ウルキアガ 第二特務。航空系半竜で異端審問官志望。通称ウッキー。</p>
 <p>シロジロ・ベルトーニ 会計。武蔵の商工会の若手幹部。</p>	 <p>点蔵・クロスユナイト 第一特務。いつも帽子などで顔を隠す忍者で使い走り。</p>
 <p>トゥーサン・ネシンバラ 書記。歴史好きの作家志望者で同人作家。</p>	 <p>直政 第六特務。機関部で働く姉御。煙草はふかすわデカイ声で笑うわで。</p>
 <p>ネイト・ミトツダイラ 第五特務。水戸松平の襲名者で騎士家系。人狼ハーフ。</p>	 <p>ネンジ HP3くらいのスライム。男らしい。</p>
 <p>ノリキ 家族を支える勤労少年。不器用型格闘家。無口で無愛想。</p>	 <p>ハイディ・オーゲザヴァラー 会計補佐。シロジロのパートナーで白狐エリマキつき。</p>
 <p>ハッサン・フルブシ カルピスマーク系インド人。カレーだけ食って飲んで生きてる。</p>	 <p>ペルソナ君 バケツヘルムの超マッチョ。無口で怪力で心優しい。</p>
 <p>ホライゾン・アリアダスト トリーの幼馴染みで現三河君主。現在自動人形中。感情が大罪武装の部品として奪われている。</p>	 <p>本多・二代 元三河の学生。本多・忠勝の息女。自称拙者、御座る語尾の濃い目。</p>
 <p>本多・正純 副会長。昨年度の三河からの真面目転入生。いろいろ家庭の事情あり。</p>	 <p>マルガ・ナルゼ 第四特務。黒髪六枚翼の白魔術師。漫研所属。</p>
 <p>マルゴット・ナイト 第三特務。金髪六枚翼の黒魔術師。笑い顔の方。</p>	<p>ミリアム・ポークウ 車椅子生活のため、在宅就学している少女。</p>
 <p>向井・鈴 目が見えないけど頑張る少女。皆のストッパー。</p>	 <p>立花・宗茂 元三征西班牙第一特務。アモーレ。現在は襲名解除で再起願中。</p>
 <p>立花・間 元三征西班牙第三特務。宗茂の嫁で砲撃系義腕少女。五十回。</p>	 <p>メアリ・スチュアート 英国女王エリザベスの異母姉。金髪巨乳。点蔵の未来嫁として同居中。王賜剣一型のオーナー。</p>
<p>三科・大 機関部部長の孫娘。メカ好き。直政の後輩にあたる。“だい”じゃなくて“ひろ”。</p>	<p>三科・翔一 三科・大の父。泰造の義理の息子。関東IZUMOの長。</p>
 <p>里見・義康 里見教導院生徒会長の少女。小さくても泣かない。武神“義”を操る。</p>	<p>大久保・忠隣 長安 極東には珍しい二重襲名の代表委員長。二年。インチキ関西弁。</p>

character

character

●教導院関係者

かのう
加納

太久保の侍女。自動人形。風紀委員長。二年。



オリオトライ・真喜子

高速戦闘型女教師。いつもジャージ。



“武蔵”

武蔵を統括する自動人形で総艦長。辛辣口調がたまりません。



“品川”

武蔵右舷一番艦の艦長式自動人形。“浅草”と同型。



“武蔵野”

武蔵中央前艦の艦長式自動人形。艦橋内の長。鈴やアデーレと親しい。



三要・光紀

三年竹組の担任。オリオトライを先輩と仰ぐ。何か微妙に不幸。



酒井・忠次

武蔵アリアダスト学院学長。昔はかなり出来る人でしたが左遷。



“浅草”

武蔵左舷一番艦の艦長式自動人形。短髪。



“奥多摩”

武蔵中央後艦の艦長式自動人形。酒井の家の雑用もする。



ヨシナオ

六護式仏蘭西から派遣された武蔵王。教導院への否決権と武蔵の管理権を持つ。

●M.H.R.R.



羽柴・藤吉郎

M.H.R.R.副会長、自動人形の猿面少女。おどおどボンバー系。



マティアス

M.H.R.R.旧派の代表。総長兼生徒会長。傀儡楽しいです！



福島・正則

羽柴麾下。十本槍のナンバー1。御座ります語尾を使用する。



オリンピア

インノケンティウスの義姉にして義妹。現教皇総長。



前田・利家

旧派の代表。会計。霊体になっており、妻の“まつ”と日々平穏に中間職。



加藤・清正

羽柴麾下。十本槍のナンバー2。金髪巨乳系で丁寧口調。

●P.A.Oda



佐々・成政

P.A.Oda六天魔軍、五大頂の一人。ヤンキー系で突撃派。でも几帳面。



不破・光治

P.A.Odaの対上越露西亞現地会計。利家、成政と三人で“三人衆”と呼ばれる。



柴田・勝家

P.A.Oda六天魔軍、五大頂の一人。体育会系。最近結婚して困りもの。

character

●伊達家

だて まむね 伊達・政宗

伊達家の当主。竜神の力を受け継いでいる。伊達家の総長兼生徒会長でもある。

かたくら こじゅうろう 片倉・小十郎

伊達家の副会長。テンション上下が激しいが選択式。

るす まさかげ 留守・政景

伊達家の仙台城管理システム。名字がとにかく紛らわしい。

だて いげざね 伊達・成実

政宗の従弟役。伊達家の副長で、機動殻”不転百足”を使用。余裕あり気味おねーさん風。

おに にわ つなもと 鬼庭・綱元

伊達家の第二特務。鬼型長寿族の武神使い。使用武神は”左月”。

よし ひめ 義姫

政宗の母。鬼型長寿族と人間のハーフ。仙台伊達教導院の学長。

●上越露西亞

マルファ・ボレッツカヤ

浮上都市ノヴゴロドを治める女市長の不死系魔神族。

●他勢力



さる とび さ すけ 猿飛・佐助

真田教導院の十勇士の一番。体術と忍術をこなす。



きり がくれ さい ぞう 霧隠・才蔵

真田教導院の十勇士の二番。風の移動術をこなす。

み よし い さ 三好・伊佐

真田教導院の十勇士の四番。別名は伊佐入道。制御式の武神を扱う少女。

あな やま こ すけ 穴山・小助

真田教導院の十勇士の五番。人の良さそうな顔の男。忍術をこなす。

ゆり かま の すけ 由利・謙之介

真田教導院の十勇士の六番。剣術を得意とする。

ね づ じん ばち 根津・陣八

真田教導院の十勇士の八番。狙撃を得意とする。

character

● Musashi

- Aoi Kimi: Toori's older sister and worshipper of the god of eroticism and dancing. Fundamentally high-tension and selfish in practice.
- Aoi Toori: Protagonist. Musashi Ariadust Academy's chancellor and student council president. Mr. Impossible.
- Asama Tomo: Daughter of the Asama Shrine, Musashi's main shrine. Childhood friend and overall victim of Toori and Kimi.
- Azuma: Child of the emperor and a half-god. All his abilities have been sealed and he lives on the Musashi.
- Adele Balfette: From a vassal family that arrived from France. Glasses girl.
- Itou Kenji: Cheerful incubus. Nude, bald, and muscular. Known as Itoken.
- Ohiroshiki Ginji: Gourmet otaku with a Heart-sama style build.
- Kiyonari Urquiaga: 2nd special duty officer. Flying half-dragon. Hopes to be an inquisitor. Known as Uqui.
- Shirojiro Bertoni: Treasurer. Young leading member of Musashi's commerce and industry guild.
- Tenzou Crossunite: 1st special duty officer. Ninja and errand-runner who always covers his face with his hat.
- Toussaint Neshinbara: Secretary. Loves history, wants to be an author, and writes doujins.
- Naomasa: 6th special duty officer. Older sister type who works in the engine division. Smokes and laughs loudly.
- Nate Mitotsudaira: 5th special duty officer. Member of a knight family and inheritor of the Mito Matsudaira name. Half werewolf.
- Nenji: Slime with about 3 HP. Manly.
- Noriki: Laborer boy who supports his family. Clumsy martial artist. Silent and unsociable.
- Heidi Augesvarer: Treasurer's aide. Shirojiro's partner. Has a white fox named Erimaki.
- Hassan Furubushi: Calpis logo-style Indian. Lives while eating and drinking only curry.
- Persona-kun: Super macho man with a bucket helmet. Silent, strong, and kindhearted.
- Horizon Ariadust: Toori's childhood friend and current ruler of Mikawa.

Currently an automaton. Her emotions were taken as parts for the Logismoi Oplo.

- Honda Futayo: Former Mikawa student. Honda Tadakatsu's daughter. Uses a strongly old-fashioned speech pattern.
- Honda Masazumi: Vice president of the student council. Diligent exchange student who arrived from Mikawa the previous year. Has various issues with her family.
- Malga Naruze: 4th special duty officer. Black-haired six-winged Weiss Hexen. Member of the manga club.
- Margot Naito: 3rd special duty officer. Blonde-haired six-winged Schwarz Hexen. Always smiling.
- Miriam Poqou: Girl who stays in her room because she lives in a wheelchair.
- Mukai Suzu: Blind but always gives it her all. Acts as everyone's stopper.
- Tachibana Muneshige: Former Tres España 1st special duty officer. Amore. Currently working to regain his inherited name.
- Tachibana Gin: Former Tres España 3rd special duty officer. Muneshige's wife and possessor of cannon-style false arms. Fifty times.
- Mary Stuart: Half-sister of English Queen Elizabeth. Well-endowed blonde. Living with Tenzou as his future wife. Owner of Ex. Collbrande.
- Mishina Hiro: Granddaughter of the engine division's chief. Loves mechanical things. Naomasa's underclassman. Her name is pronounced Hiro, not Dai.
- Mishina Shouichi: Mishina Hiro's father. Taizou's son-in-law. Head of Kantou IZUMO.
- Satomi Yoshiyasu: Satomi Academy's student council president. Small but does not cry. Uses the god of war Righteousness.
- Ookubo Tadachika/Nagayasu: A rare Far Easterner with a double inherited name. A second year and head of the representative committee. Speaks in a fake-sounding Kansai dialect.
- Kanou: Ookubo's maid. An automaton. Head of the public morals committee. A second year.

● Academy Officials

- Oriotorai Makiko: High-speed battling teacher. Always wears a track suit.
- Sakai Tadatsugu: Musashi Ariadust Academy's president. Used to be a very able person but was demoted.
- "Musashi": Automaton that supervises the Musashi and overall commander. Her sharp comments are hard to put up with.
- "Asakusa": Captain automaton of Musashi's first port ship. Short hair.
- "Shinagawa": Captain automaton of Musashi's first starboard ship. Same model as "Asakusa".
- "Okutama": Captain automaton of Musashi's rear central ship. Also takes care of odd jobs at Sakai's home.
- "Musashino": Captain automaton of Musashi's front central ship. Leader on the bridge. Close to Suzu and Adele.
- Yoshinao: King of Musashi who was sent from Hexagone Française. Has a veto right toward the academy and has the authority to manage Musashi.
- Sanyou Mitsuki: Class 3-Bamboo's homeroom teacher. Looks up to Oriotorai. Somewhat sensitive and unlucky.

● **M.H.R.R.**

- Hashiba Toukichirou: M.H.R.R. Vice President and monkey-masked automaton girl. The nervous bomber type.
- Olimpia: Innocentius's older and younger stepsister. Current Pope-Chancellor.
- Matthias: Representative of M.H.R.R.'s Catholics. Student Council President. Younger brother of Chancellor and Emperor Rudolf II. Being a puppet is fun!
- Maeda Toshiie: Catholic representative. Treasurer. Samurai attendant that has become a ghost and is peacefully spending his days with his wife Matsu.
- Fukushima Masanori: Under Hashiba's direct command. Ten Spears #1. Speaks in an old-fashioned way.
- Katou Kiyomasa: Under Hashiba's direct command. Ten Spears #2. The busty blonde type and speaks politely.

● **P.A. Oda**

- Sassa Narimasa: One of P.A. Oda's Six Heavenly Demon Army and Five Great Peaks. Delinquent and assault type. But methodical.
- Shibata Katsuie: One of P.A. Oda's Six Heavenly Demon Army and Five Great Peaks. Athletic type. Very troublesome after his recent marriage.
- Fuwa Mitsuharu: P.A. Oda's local anti-Sviet Rus treasurer. Her, Toshiie, and Narimasa are known as the Triumvirate.

● Date Clan

- Date Masamune: Head of the Date clan. Inherits the power of the Dragon God. Chancellor and student council president of the Date clan.
- Date Narumi: Masamune's cousin. Vice chancellor of the Date clan and uses a mobile shell named Unturning Centipede. Confident elder sister type.
- Katakura Kojuurou: Vice president of the Date clan. Full of intense highs and lows.
- Oniniwa Tsunamoto: 2nd special duty officer of the Date clan. Demonic long-lived god of war pilot. Pilots a god of war named Sagetsu.
- Rusu Masakage: Control system of the Date clan's Sendai Castle. The family name can cause some confusion.^[1]
- Yoshihime: Masamune's mother. Half demonic long-lived and half human. Principal of Sendai Date Academy.

● Sviet Rus

- Marfa Boretskaya: Female mayor of the floating city Novgorod. An undead demon.

● Other

- Sarutobi Sasuke: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #1. Uses martial arts and ninja techniques.
- Kirigakure Saizou: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #2. Uses a wind movement technique.
- Miyoshi Isa: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #4. AKA Isa Nyuudou. Girl who uses a remote-controlled god of war.

- Anayama Kosuke: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #5. Looks like a nice guy. Uses ninja techniques.
- Yuri Kamanosuke: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #6. Specializes in sword fighting.
- Nezu Jinpachi: Sanada Academy Ten Braves #8. Specializes in sniping.

Glossary

- ・**教導院**:学校施設のこと。実質上の政軍中心部。分校が多く存在する。
- ・**教譜**:神や聖譜を信奏する組織。集団。
- ・**極東**:重奏統合騒乱の後、神州をこう呼ぶ。
- ・**K.P.A.Italia**:安芸諸国連合+イタリア都市連合のこと。
- ・**賢鉱石、賢水**:流体を含んだ鉱石、水。流体燃料としても使用可能。
- ・**校則法**:聖連が取り決めた教導院間の基本法。

さ行

- ・**暫定議会**:武蔵において、生徒会や総長連合、委員会の官僚となる大人達の組織。
- ・**清らか大市【サンメルカド】**:三征西班牙のブランド。
- ・**Shaja【シャージャ】**:ムラサイ圏における“了解”の意。本来は勇気を示す語の表音。
- ・**Jud.【ジャッジ/ジャッジメント】**:咎人用の“応答”“了解”の意。
- ・**重奏世界**:かつて神州のコピーを置いた異空間のこと。地脈制御で保たれていた。
- ・**重奏統合争乱**:重奏世界が崩壊した際に生じた重奏世界側住人と現実世界側(神州)住人の戦争。重奏世界側が勝利して神州は暫定支配を受ける。
- ・**重奏領域**:落ちてきた重奏世界の神州が、碎けながら現実側に合一した箇所。
- ・**襲名**:歴史再現のために適格者が歴史上の人物を襲名すること。
- ・**術式**:流体を加工することで空間中に奇跡を起こすこと。
- ・**白砂台座**:出雲産業座の神社系ブランド。
- ・**人工末世**:英国の“花園”に末世研究用で作られた地脈の歪みの圧縮。
- ・**神格武装**:通常の武装とは違い、特有の能力を持つ武装。
- ・**神州**:極東のかつての呼び方。
- ・**清武田**:中国と武田家の合一。
- ・**神道**:極東の教譜。極東の神々を信奏し、神奏術を用いる。
- ・**上越露西亞【スヴィエートルーシ】**:上杉家+露西亞のこと。
- ・**聖協**:聖譜協奏派。上越露西亞で独自発展した旧派。
- ・**聖術**:Tsirhc系の術式。旧派は聖譜や聖者

あ行

- ・**黒金侍【アイゼンリッター】**:M.H.R.R.改派領邦の主企業。
- ・**ArchsArt**:“大属の芸術”。英国の主企業。
- ・**安土城**:P.A.Odaが有する巨大航空戦艦。
- ・**尼子家**:元IZUMOの地。毛利と六護式仏蘭西によって滅亡。
- ・**有明**:関東IZUMOによる武蔵専用浮きドック。
- ・**アルマダの海戦**:英国と三征西班牙の間に生じた海戦。三征西班牙が英国上陸を画策したが壊滅する。
- ・**出雲産業座(IZUMO)**:極東最大規模の企業座。極東の神社の総本山で武蔵の建造を担った企業。
- ・**英国【イングランド】**:浮遊島を用いており、極東の土地や大名を支配していない。
- ・**ヴェストファーレン条約**:三十年戦争などの講和条約。
- ・**H.R.R.M.**:“神聖騎士団鉄工会”。M.H.R.R.旧派領邦の主企業。
- ・**女神万歳【エウロパ】**:六護式仏蘭西の主企業。
- ・**六護式仏蘭西【エグザゴンフランセーズ】**:毛利家+フランスのこと。
- ・**王賜剣【エクスカリバー】**:一型と二型がある。
- ・**ATELL**:流体の最小単位。術式に使用する。
- ・**見下し魔山【エーデルブロッケン】**:魔術ブランド。本社所在不明。
- ・**M.H.R.R.**:羽柴家+神聖ローマ帝国のこと。
- ・**七部六仙道【オアト】**:中国の仙道を基礎とした教譜。
- ・**奥州**:東北地域のこと。東側を伊達家。西側を最上家が治める。
- ・**奥州藤原(平泉)**:奥州の南側にある長寿族の隠れ里。
- ・**御館の乱【おたてのらん】**:上杉家内における謙信死後の跡目相続争い。上杉・景勝と長尾・景虎が争い、景勝が勝利した。

か行

- ・**外燃拝気**:自分の外に蓄積された拝気のこと。流体燃料などが該当。
- ・**旧派【カトリック】**:古くから存在するTsirhcの主流。

・**ノヴゴロド**:露西亜の西端の大商業都市。浮上都市だが、雷帝イヴァン四世の大粛清で死者の都市となった。

は行

- ・**拝気**:人間が一時間存在するために必要な流体。3600ATELL。術式の消費ATELL換算単位。
- ・**花園**:英国にて作られた人工末世研究用の空間。
- ・**範鋼**:清のブランド。頑丈だけどやや荒い。
- ・**非衰退調律進行**:黎明の時代に起きた、聖譜や重奏世界を作った運動。
- ・**P.A.Oda**:織田家+オスマン。
- ・**表示枠**:各教譜の基本加護を使用するための術式デバイス。
- ・**改派【プロテスタント】**:旧派腐敗からの脱却と時代に合わせたTsirhcの新流。
- ・**機械仕掛けの明星【フィーノアルバ】**:K.P.A.Italiaのブランド。発条式を売り物とする。
- ・**武神**:人が同化して動く巨大な人型機械。
- ・**文禄の役**:羽柴の朝鮮侵攻。第一回日のこと。
- ・**奉納**:神に、神の喜ぶものや内燃拝気を納めること。献納。

ま行

- ・**走狗【マウス】**:神道教譜と奏者の仲介をする霊獣型デバイス。他教譜では走徒とも言う。
- ・**魔術**:欧州で絶賛迫害中の民間術式。
- ・**末世**:この世の終わり。聖譜の歴史記述が途切れる一六四八年のこと。
- ・**帝**:神格者、京にて神器による地脈制御を行っていると言われる。俗世に関与しない。
- ・**三河**:元信公の地脈炉暴走崩壊で消滅。
- ・**水戸**:奥州の南、江戸の北。ミツダイラの所領地。
- ・**武蔵**:航空都市艦。極東に許された唯一の独立領土。



関係、改派は聖譜のみから力を導く。

- ・**生徒会**:各教導院の内務、外務などを行う組織。
- ・**聖譜**:前地球時代の歴史を記した歴史書。七組+抄本がある。
- ・**聖譜記述**:聖譜の機能により、前地球時代の歴史が百年先まで自動更新される。が、一六四八年の記述を最後に更新が停止している。
- ・**聖譜顕装**:聖譜の持つ能力を転用するための武装。
- ・**精霊術**:意志を持った流体とも言える精霊に話し掛け、力を借りる原始的な術式。
- ・**聖連**:聖譜連盟。歴史再現を主導するための組織。
- ・**奏者**:各教譜の信徒。
- ・**総長連合**:総長を長に、各教導院の警備など、実働と指揮を行う組織。
- ・**卒業**:極東以外の国は無期限制限。極東は十八歳卒業制。

た行

- ・**代演**:術式発動に拝気を使用する代わりに、神の喜ぶものを奉納すること。
- ・**大罪武装**:人間の大罪をモチーフに作られた大量破壊武装。
- ・**ダンハイ**:教譜の一つ。輪廻転生を主軸としている。
- ・**地脈**:空間を構成する流体の流れる経路の内、太いもの。
- ・**地脈炉**:地脈から流体を抽出精製する炉。地脈の変異を起こしやすく、爆発すると数キロ範囲が消滅して不安定化するためTsirhc教譜では禁止。
- ・**超祝福艦隊**:アルマダ海戦用の三征西班牙の艦隊。最新鋭艦で構成。
- ・**Tsirhc**:神の子を長に据えた教譜。聖譜を信奉する。
- ・**Tes.【テス/テストメント】**:“応答”“了解”の意。
- ・**通し道歌**:江戸時代に極東に発生する童謡の試作型。
- ・**三征西班牙【トレスエスパンア】**:大内、大友家+スペインのこと。ポルトガルも併合中。

な行

- ・**内燃拝気**:自分の中にため込んだ拝気のこと。

words

- ・**武蔵アリアダスト学院**:武蔵上、奥多摩に存在する極東の代表校。
- ・**矛盾許容**:この世界の基礎能。あらゆる物理法則の同時存在を叶える。
- ・**ムラサイ**:Tsirhcとは別に聖譜を信奏する後発派。

ら行

- ・**流体**:矛盾許容型の空間構成要素。
- ・**流体燃料**:燃料として精製された流体。外燃拌気や、流体駆動器に用いられる。
- ・**流体駆動器**:流体の空間変異力を用いた駆動器。効果は内部の紋章などによって変化する。
- ・**流体炉**:空間から流体を抽出精製する炉。地脈炉より出力は低いが比較的安全。
- ・**竜脈炉**:莫大量の流体を爆発させ、半径数キロを消滅させる爆弾。羽柴が有する。
- ・**黎明の時代**:聖譜成立以前の時代のこと。
- ・**歴史再現**:聖譜記述を人々が再現して世界の流れを保つこと。

A

- Academy: An educational facility. Used as the center of political and military power. Tend to have many branch schools.
- Academy Rules: The basic laws upheld between academies. Agreed to by the Testament Union.
- Age of Dawn: The age before the Testament was established.
- Amako clan: Former IZUMO land. Destroyed by Mouri and Hexagone Française.
- Anti-Divine Pro-Tuning: The action taken during the Age of Dawn that led to the creation of the Testament and Harmonic World.
- Apocalypse: The end of the world. 1648 when the Testament's history descriptions end.
- ArchsArt: England's primary corporation.
- Ariake: Floating dock for the Musashi provided by Kantou IZUMO.
- Armada battle: A naval battle fought between England and Tres España. Tres España planned to land on England but their fleet was destroyed.
- Artificial Apocalypse: A compressed ley line distortion created in England's Avalon to research the Apocalypse.
- ATELL: The smallest unit of ether. Used for spells.
- Avalon: A space created in England to research the artificial Apocalypse.
- Azuchi Castle: P.A. Oda's giant aerial warship.

B

- Blessings: The amount of ether needed for a human to exist for one hour. 3600 ATELL. Conversion unit for a spell's ATELL consumption.
- Bunroku Campaign: Hashiba's invasion of Korea. The first one.

C

- Catholic: The old mainstream version of Tsirhc.
- Chancellor's Officers: An organization led by the chancellor which leads the academy and performs work such as defense.
- Contradiction Allowance: The foundational ability of the world. Allows the simultaneous existence of all sorts of physical laws.

D

- Divine States: Former name of the Far East.
- Divine Weapon: A weapon that, unlike a normal weapon, has a unique ability.
- Dragon Line Reactor: A bomb that uses a runaway ley line reactor to destroy a wide area.
- Dunhi: A religion. Focused on reincarnation.

E

- Edel Brocken: Magic brand. Location of headquarters unknown.
- Eisenritter: Primary corporation of M.H.R.R.'s Protestant principalities.
- Emperor: A divine individual who is said to control the ley lines using the Imperial Regalia in Kyou. Does not interfere with the world.
- England: Uses a floating island and does not control any Far Eastern land or Far Eastern daimyo.
- Ether: Component that makes up contradiction-allowing space.
- Ether Engine: An engine that uses ether's space-altering ability. The effect changes based on the internal crest.
- Ether Fuel: Ether that has been purified into fuel. Used as External Blessings or for ether engines.
- Ether Reactor: A reactor that extracts and purifies ether from the air. Has a lower output than a ley line reactor, but is relatively safe.
- Europa: Hexagone Française's primary corporation.
- Excalibur: Has a first and second version.
- External Blessings: Blessings accumulated outside of oneself. Ether fuel is an example.

F

- Fan Gang: Qing brand. Durable but a bit rough.
- Far East: Name of the Divine States after the Harmonic Unification War.
- Fino Alba: K.P.A. Italian brand. Their use of springs is their selling point.

G

- God of War: A giant humanoid machine that people combine with to move.
- Graduation: No limit for nations other than the Far East. Far Easterners must graduate at 18.
- Grande y Felicísima Armada: Tres España's fleet for the Armada battle. Made up of cutting-edge ships.

H

- Harmonic Territory: Locations where the fallen Harmonic World Divine States unified with the real world while breaking apart.
- Harmonic Unification War: A war between the harmonic world residents and the real world (Divine States) residents after the destruction of the harmonic world. The harmonic world residents won and began a provisional rule over the Divine States.
- Harmonic World: A former alternate space that copied the Divine States. Preserved through ley line control.
- Hexagone Française: Mouri clan + France.
- History Recreation: Recreating the Testament descriptions to maintain the path the world takes.
- Holy Spells: Tsirhc spells. The Catholics are related to the Testament and holy individuals while the Protestants derive power only from the Testament.
- H.R.R.M.: Holy Knights Ironworks Guild. Primary corporation of M.H.R.R.'s Catholic principalities.

I

- Inherited Name: The name of a historical figure given to an appropriate individual for the history recreation.
- Internal Blessings: blessings stored within oneself.
- IZUMO: The Far East's largest corporation. The headquarters for Far Eastern shrines and the corporation that built the Musashi.

J

- Judge/Judgment: Means “understood”. Used by criminals.

K

- K.P.A. Italia: Association of Aki States + Union of Italian City States.

L

- Ley Line: The thicker of the pathways through which ether flows.
- Ley Line Reactor: A reactor that extracts and refines ether from ley lines. Can easily cause ley line mutations and destroy everything within several kilometers if they explode. Due to their instability, they are banned by the Tsirhc religion.
- Logismo Oplo: Weapons of mass destruction created on the motif of the seven deadly sins.

M

- Magic: Folk spells currently under persecution in Europe.
- M.H.R.R.: Hashiba clan + Holy Roman Empires.
- Mikawa: Destroyed by the collapse of Lord Motonobu's ley line reactor.
- Mito: South of Oushuu and north of Edo. Mitotsudaira's territory.
- Mlasi: A later non-Tsirhc religion that also worships the Testament.
- Mouse: A spirit beast device to act as an intermediary between the Shinto religion and its musicians. Other religions use different names.
- Musashi: Aerial city ship. The sole independent territory allowed for the Far East.

[First Starboard Ship – Shinagawa/Second Starboard Ship – Tama/Third Starboard Ship – Takao/First Central Ship – Musashino/Back Central Ship – Okutama/First Port Ship – Asakusa/Second Port Ship – Murayama/Third Port Ship – Oume]

- Musashi Ariadust Academy: The Far East's representative academy which exists on Okutama of Musashi.
- Musician: A religion's worshiper.

N

- Novgorod: A large trade city on the western end of Russia. It is a floating city, but became a city of the dead after Ivan IV the Terrible's purge.

O

- Oat: A religion based on China's sages.
- Offering: Providing a god with something they will enjoy or Internal Blessings.
- Orei Metallo/Nero: Ore or water containing ether. Can be used as ether fuel.
- Orthodox: The Orthodox Concerto religion. Sviet Rus's unique branch of Catholicism.
- Oushuu: The Tohoku region. The Date clan rules the east and the Mogami clan rules the west.
- Oushuu Fujiwara (Hiraizumi): A hidden village of the long-lived in southern Oushuu.

P

- P.A. Oda: Oda clan + Ottomans.
- Peace of Westphalia: The peace treaty that ended the Thirty Years' War.
- Protestant: A new style of Tsirhc created to escape the corruption of Catholicism and to adjust to the new age.
- Provisional Council: Group of adults who act as bureaucrats toward Musashi's student council, chancellor's officers, and student committees.

Q

- Qing-Takeda: Combination of China and the Takeda clan.

R

- Religion: Organizations or groups that worship a god or the Testament.

S

- San Mercado: Tres Españan brand.
- Shaja: Used in Mlasi regions and means “understood”. Originally meant “courage”.
- Shinto: Far Eastern religion. Worships the Far Eastern gods and uses divine music spells.
- Shirasago Enterprises: IZUMO’s shrine brand.
- Siege of Otate: Conflict over the succession of the Uesugi clan after Kenshin’s death. Uesugi Kagekatsu and Nagao Kageatora fought and Kagekatsu won.
- Sign Frame: Spell device needed to use each religion’s basic protection.
- Song of Passage: Prototype of a fairy tale created in the Far East during the Edo period.
- Spell: Causing a miracle in a certain space by processing ether.
- Spirit Spell: Primitive spells used by talking to and borrowing the power of spirits, which are ether with a will of its own.
- Student Council: The organization that handles an academy’s domestic and foreign affairs.
- Substitution: Offering something to please a god instead of using Blessings to activate a spell.
- Sviet Rus: Uesugi clan + Russia.

T

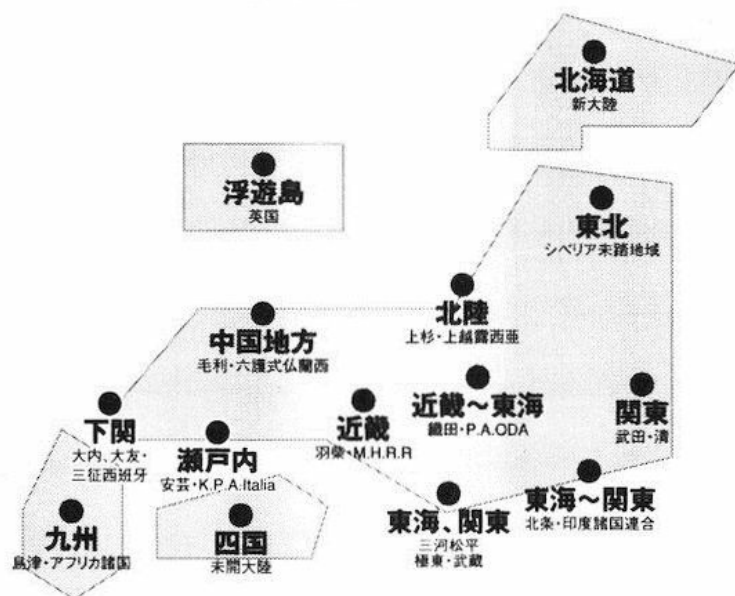
- Tes/Testament: Means “understood”.
- Testament: A history book that provides the history of the earth’s previous age. There are seven pairs and excerpts.
- Testament Descriptions: History of the earth’s previous age that is automatically updated by the Testament. However, it stopped updating after the description for 1648.
- Testament Union: An organization meant to lead the history recreation.
- Testamenta Arma: Weapons that use the ability of the Testaments.
- Tres España: Oouchi and Ootomo clans + Spain. Currently includes Portugal.
- Tsirhc: A religion which places the Son of God at the top. Worships the Testament.

World

●チャット ●実況通神呼び名一覧●

- ・あずま：東
- ・あさま：浅間・智
- ・いんび：伊藤・健児（イトケン）
- ・俺：葵・トーリ
- ・金マル：マルゴット・ナイト
- ・義：里見・義康
- ・傷有り：メアリ・スチュアート
- ・銀狼：ネイト・ミトツダイラ
- ・現役娘：人狼女王
- ・賢姉様：葵・喜美
- ・481：三科・翔一
- ・立花夫：立花・宗茂
- ・立花嫁：立花・闇
- ・煙草女：直政
- ・十ZO：点蔵・クロスユナイト
- ・蜻蛉切：本多・二代
- ・粘着王：ネンジ
- ・83：ハッサン・フルブシ
- ・貧従士：アデーレ・バルフェット
- ・副会長：本多・正純
- ・ベル：向井・鈴
- ・ホラ子：ホライゾン・アリアダスト
- ・●画：マルガ・ナルゼ
- ・○べ屋：ハイディ・オーゲザヴァラー
- ・847：三科・大
- ・未熟者：トゥーサン・ネシンバラ
- ・武蔵王：ヨシナオ
- ・眼鏡：シェイクスピア
- ・礼賛者：御広敷・銀二
- ・労働者：ノリキ

●極東勢力図●



●今後の武蔵の予定●



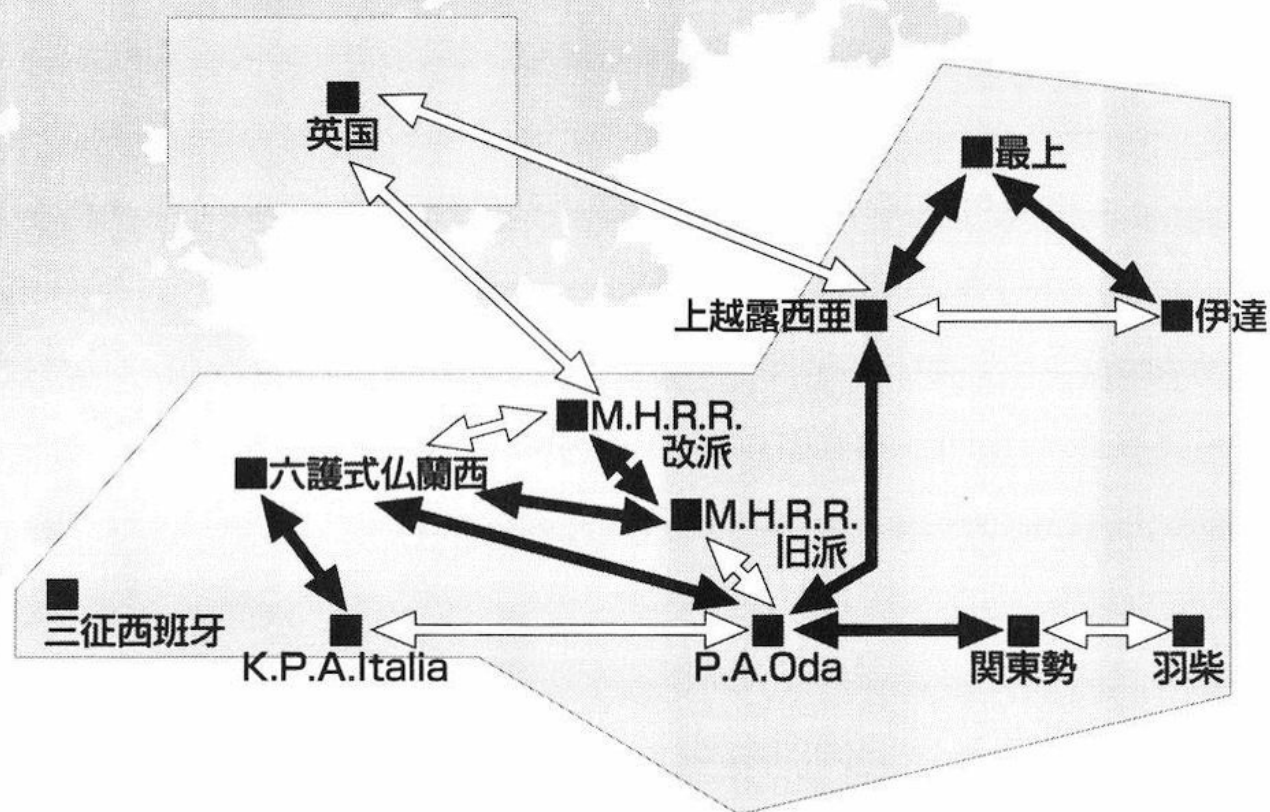
「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! 武蔵はこれからどういう風味にするつもりなんだよ!？」



「フフ、現状は武蔵を戦闘も出来るように改造中。それから、まずは伊達家を味方につけよう、っていうのが基本ね。
三方ヶ原で義経が言っていた“伊達と上杉を味方につける”を行くんじゃないかしら」

world

●勢力関係図（4〈上〉開始時版）●



■極東（武蔵）

- 三征西班牙
- K.P.A.Italia
- 英国
- M.H.R.R.改派
- M.H.R.R.旧派
- 六護式仏蘭西
- P.A.Oda
- 関東勢

- ⇄ 協働
- 敵対

無矢印は放置
または緩い警戒

Divine Chat Screenname List:

- Azuma: Azuma
- Asama: Asama Tomo
- Obscene: Itou Kenji (Itoken)
- Me: Aoi Toori
- Gold Mar: Margot Naito
- Righteousness: Satomi Yoshiyasu
- Scarred: Mary Stuart
- Silver Wolf: Nate Mitosudaira
- Still Got It: Reine des Garous
- Wise Sister: Aoi Kimi
- 481: Mishina Shouichi
- Tachibana Husband: Tachibana Muneshige
- Tachibana Wife: Tachibana Gin
- Smoking Girl: Naomasa
- 10ZO: Tenzou Crossunite
- Tonbokiri: Honda Futayo
- Sticky King: Nenji
- 83: Hassan Furubushi
- Flat Vassal: Adele Balfette
- Vice President: Honda Masazumi
- Bell: Mukai Suzu
- Hori-ko: Horizon Ariadust
- Mal-Ga: Malga Naruze
- Marube-ya: Heidi Augesvarer
- 847: Mishina Hiro
- Novice: Toussaint Neshinbara
- Musashi King: Yoshinao
- Four Eyes: Shakespeare
- Worshipper: Ohiroshiki Ginji
- Laborer: Noriki

Far Eastern Powers:

[Same map as in 3-A.]

Musashi’s Plans:

Toori: Sis! Sis! What’s Musashi planning to do now!?

Kimi: Heh heh. The Musashi is currently being remodeled so it can fight. Then we’ll be getting the Date clan on our side. We’ll probably be making allies of Date and Uesugi like Yoshitsune said during Mikatagahara.

Relationships Between the Major Powers (as of 4-A): [Same as 3-C except for the following]

Upper right: Mogami

Down and left from Mogami: Sviet Rus Down and right from Mogami: Date Far right: Hashiba

School Rules

Article 120 Line 1

- During times of peace, each academy has the authority to manage transportation through their territory and has a duty to manage and preserve it.

Article 120 Line 2

- Each academy's transportation management authority is based on the range designated in the Testament descriptions and is subject to the ruler/vassal relationships described therein.

Prologue: Those with their Feet in a Winding Stream

序章

『くねり流れの足着き人達』



紆余曲折の
終着点は何処にあるのか
配点（自由主義）

Where is the final destination

Of all those twists and turns?

Point Allocation (Liberalism)

Light poured down from high in the sky.

It was the sunlight of an early summer afternoon.

More than warmth, it carried a stabbing heat, and it cast deep shadows across the land.

Those shadows created waves on a three square kilometer grassy field surrounded by forest.

A faint breeze washed across the mown grass, creating waves.

But there was a gap in the waves. A small stream cut south to north across the middle of the field.

Two figures sat on the northern downstream bank on the southern end of that stream of shadowy water. Their legs were cooling off in the water nearly up to the knee, but neither of them had human form.

One was a girl-character bedsheet with legs growing from it and the other was a body pillow.

The body pillow kicked up the water with its normal legs. It was a carefree motion. With the movement of a long acquaintance, it turned its air hole toward the sheet.

“Wow, it’s already the afternoon and the water’s still cold! I feel like a child again, Koni-tan!”

“Yes, it’s a shame no one else could escape the temporary provisional council building, Nobu-tan!”

Still sitting, they both swayed back and forth while singing an anime OP.

“♪Don’t you look down on yourself like that. Overthrow yourself so you have to look up at yourself. You can argue your case with incredible ease. Trust in yourself and your dreams will come true. If you’ve hit a dead end with the lesser

cuckoo, just show your purity with a Ha-Ra-Ki-Ri♪”

After singing, the body pillow sighed and the suddenly looked back to the north.

A few white and black forms were visible beyond the tall grass hiding them. They were large transport ships bearing Musashi’s emblem. The body pillow spoke up when he saw them in the sunlight.

“Since the Musashi is being remodeled in the Kantou Izumo’s Ariake dock, the residents, facilities, and companies not needed for the remodeling are being carried out.”

The body pillow continued speaking.

“Even those of us on the Provisional Council are using the temporary Provisional Council building at the first land port along with the Musashino’s ships.”

As he spoke, the wind blew. A few ships measuring a dozen meters were ascending from the ships docked at the land port to north.

But they stopped after reaching a certain height.

As the body pillow and sheet watched, cargo was carried out from the floating ships’ decks and side hatches. The altitude differences were used to send the cargo along the thick rope passageways connecting the ships.

“So the early afternoon cargo transportation has begun. Mito’s land ports were originally divided up so other nations could use them, but now they’re being used by the transport ships providing living spaces for the Musashi’s eight ships. The Musashi’s cities have rearranged their wide blocks into transport ships that have docked at those land ports separated by the forests. As for the Musashi itself...”

The body pillow looked even further north.

Green mountains were visible in the distance and the sky could be seen twenty kilometers away.

“Shirakawa, the entrance to Oushuu. The Ariake is remodeling the Musashi

there.”

“Only because Date holds eastern Oushuu and they won’t let us move any further north because they’re ‘busy’. And we can’t move into Siberia in western Oushuu because Mogami and Sviet Rus’s Uesugi are also putting off making a decision. Time passes, but little else happens.”

The sheet sighed, but the body pillow said that was not necessarily a bad thing.

“Time is useful. The Musashi’s remodeling will be complete soon and we can get somewhat used to living in these divided temporary homes. It wasn’t a bad decision by the Student Council after the loss at Mikatagahara.”

“True.” The sheet swayed as it sighed in a different way from before. “They moved the people from the Musashi so they wouldn’t see the damage and split them up into eight groups so they couldn’t form a union of negativity. And by sending them down to the surface and giving them a busy lifestyle they aren’t used to, they get a nice change of pace and can’t lose themselves in their negative emotions.”

“And they were also given the choice to leave the ships and live in Mito’s castle town. ...Also, the manufacturing districts are making parts for the Musashi and volunteers can return to the Musashi to help with the remodeling for some bonus pay. They’re given a way out and their overall unity is given a chance to recover.”

“Was that Masazumi-kun’s decision?”

“Mostly,” said the body pillow. “But some of the arrangements were not made by her. That was done by the Student Council’s underclassmen.”

“I see. Do you mean Ookubo and Kanou?”

“Yes.” The body pillow nodded. “That’s Ookubo-kun’s daughter. ...She is the daughter of a colleague who inherited the Ookubo name before Mikawa was cleared out. Afterwards, he came to Musashi like I did. I had thought he was living a fairly low-key life, but his daughter has done enough to inherit the names of Ookubo Tadachika and Nagayasu. Add in Kanou, the inherited name automaton that came with them from Mikawa, and they are certainly skilled. ... Not as much as Masazumi, but they are some people to watch among the

second years.”

“Kh... I can’t stand how you hint at the connections you have there.”

“According to the Testament descriptions, the Honda and Ookubo clans have some political battles. It would help me quite a bit if Masazumi could get along with them. But...politics is more than a domestic affair. Isn’t that right, Konitan?”

“Judge. You mean Hashiba’s warriors which have stopped moving north for the history recreation of the Korean invasion in Edo and the reactions from Date, Mogami, Uesugi, and the other Kantou powers?”

“Yes. And do you remember what Lady Yoshitsune said during the Battle of Mikatagahara?”

“Judge.” The sheet nodded and turned its air hole toward the body pillow. “Make allies of Date and Uesugi.”

“That means it would be best to actively try to make allies of Date and Uesugi.”

A boy in glasses drew a map of Oushuu on the blackboard.

The armband on his short sleeve read “Secretary – Neshinbara Toussaint”.

...Well, they probably already understand all this.

He looked across the sparsely filled classroom. This was Class 3-Plum of Musashi Ariadust Academy at the back of Okutama, Musashi’s rear central ship. He could see all of the Musashi outside the window. He could also see the interior of the Ariake, the specialized dock the Musashi had sunken into.

The Ariake looked like a vast hole from here. Large land bridges passed by on either side and lifts covered the walls and ceiling, but it was mostly an IZUMO land port with a roof.

The Musashi was contained within, but this was different from before. Many objects covered the surface of the eight ships, scaffolding surrounded them, or pieces were missing.

...It’s being remodeled. And this time, it’s getting weapons.

Below the coverings, it was being remodeled on the pretext of acting as a mercenary for other nations. Some were meant for defense and they had apparently reached the testing phase.

I wonder how this will turn out. I hope it's cool. I hope the cannons have names, thought Neshinbara as he heard a woman's voice from the side. It was Oriotorai who had removed her track suit jacket. She was checking over some datasheets on where the restaurants on the Musashi's surface and interior had moved.

"Okay, okay. Just because you're using the self-study time for a meeting is no excuse for getting distracted. Asama, Mitotsudaira, Masazumi, and everyone waiting for work may be out, but make sure you do this right. ...So Neshinbara, what do you think about joining forces with Sviet Rus's Uesugi?"

"Oh, judge." Neshinbara continued speaking. "According to the Testament, Date joins Matsudaira for Sekigahara and Uesugi joins Hashiba, so the standard thinking would be to assume allying with Uesugi will be difficult. The powerful nation of Mogami stands between them, but since it shrinks after Sekigahara, going for time-limited cooperation would be useful."

Someone spoke up from the back of the classroom. It was Naito, with her six gold wings. She was using a Magie Figur to communicate with Naruze who was helping transport cargo outside.

"Mogami declines and then Date becomes the ruler of Oushuu, right? So would we be getting Date's support and using their influence to get Uesugi on our side?"

"I doubt it would be that simple. Date, Mogami, and Sviet Rus's Uesugi have had connections for a long time and they have continued their history recreation through discussions rather than battle."

That comment came from Crossunite who sat next to Mary, who wore an English summer uniform.

He opened a sign frame by the ceiling so everyone could see. It displayed a bird's-eye-view map of Oushuu to Jouetsu, but it contained several large red circles and geometric shapes.

“These are the many Harmonic Territories that Oushuu and Sviet Rus are well known for.”

They almost entirely filled Oushuu and Sviet Rus. More of the map was covered in red than was not. Ohiroshiki sighed and spoke up while looking almost straight up at the map.

“Sviet Rus, Mogami, and Date have all fortified themselves behind these natural defenses, haven’t they?”

“Judge. They have techniques for living in the freezing cold that were cultivated in the Harmonic Divine States. And they use them to live in those vast Harmonic Territories. Not even the Musashi can approach without using the safe corridors. When the Harmonic Divine States collapsed, the few regions that collapsed first ended up like this; but Oushuu has more than anywhere else and has become very self-sufficient.”

Yes, Musashi’s ability to trade is difficult to use here, agreed Neshinbara.

...Oushuu has long been wary of outsiders.

They had historical connections from long ago, so they had been able to handle everything through peaceful discussions.

“In the Age of Dawn before the Testament was made, Oushuu is said to have been the site of the most intense fighting in the war over the Far East’s land. That fighting was treated as an early recreation of the later eastern expeditions of the successive imperial courts, so a relatively peaceful age began on the Far Eastern side of things. But with the confusion of the Kamakura Shogunate’s establishment and the Harmonic Unification War, it became a dangerous region once more. Especially since the collapse of the many Harmonic regions caused a resonance that affected the surrounding Far Eastern ley lines. That attuned the Far Eastern land with the Harmonic regions, making them just as frigid.”

So...

“Because the Musashi would normally have such a hard time getting in, the Provisional Council and the heads of committees will be sent in first. But we can’t spare any time on foreign diplomacy with the remodeling going on, so we can’t send anyone out to the other nations. ...Musashi has to effectively cut off

all diplomacy at the moment.”

“Isn’t that bad?”

The nudist was sitting in his desk wearing swim trunks.

Neshinbara considered ignoring him.

But the musician of an entertainer god built up internal Blessings by offering up performances, so that was probably what this was. It was not just his personal preference. That had to be it. And so Neshinbara answered the idiot.

“Musashi has not interacted with any other nation for about three weeks now. The Hirazumo hidden city of Oushuu Fujiwara gave us some initial supplies, but they’ve only been watching since.”

“I see.”

Seeing the idiot pout his lips and lose himself in thought, Neshinbara smiled in his heart.

He had shown a lot of interest in these meetings lately.

Of course, he never seemed to actually be listening. It was less about him understanding what was being said and more an interest in what everyone was involved in and what they were doing. But...

...I wonder.

Long ago, he had said he wanted to create a kingdom to make everyone’s dreams come true. And by rescuing his princess, he had started moving in that direction; but he was watching what the rulers of other nations did, asking the Reine des Garous about it, and had overcome the defeat at Mikatagahara.

...I really do wonder.

They were acting on the world domination and retrieval of the Logismoi Óplo he had started at Mikawa.

Since they were on the move, in a way, he was not with them. His objective remained unchanged, so he only needed to watch.

But, thought Neshinbara. What if he found a way to do more than watch and

actually took part? Would we no longer have anything like Mikatagahara happen?

I do wonder. Am I viewing him as too much of a hero? But he's still peeping and doing stupid things. When he leaves these meetings, he keeps smiling and doing weird things like he always has.

...I wonder.

"Yes."

Neshinbara nodded and spoke. He inhaled, changed his line of thought, and glanced over at the idiot for just a moment.

"This is pretty bad, but we do have an intermediary even with diplomacy cut off. Oushuu has always been a resistant land, but once you get close, they treat you like family. ...The merchants on both sides are secretly trading to keep business booming, aren't they?"

"Judge."

Heidi nodded from right in front of the teacher's desk. Shirojiro was out working and she was assisting him via divine transmission.

"We've mainly been dealing in food. But the most valuable items are the Oushuu-made Orei Metallo. Konishi-sama of the Provisional Council is handling most of that. We're doing our best to see if we can steal some of that business from him."

"I'm not about to lose to the Student Council. This deal is going to make me a lot of money, after all. I can buy the Orei Metallo from Date and Mogami's ruins and sell them directly to IZUMO. It's especially profitable with the remodeling going on."

As the sheet spoke with its legs soaking in the small stream, the body pillow sitting next to it nodded.

"We need to show them that we are still their superiors. ...But Koni-tan, you started to say something before we all began dancing in the viewing room, didn't you? What happened in the Date clan? ...Two weeks ago, Hashiba visited Date,

Mogami, and Sviet Rus to 'check on their history recreation'. Sviet Rus is being invaded by P.A. Oda's Shibata, but Mogami and Date both stopped everything they were doing, didn't they? Of course, I'm sure that was meant to show that Oushuu couldn't rely on Musashi and to show what a threat Hashiba is to them."

"Judge." The sheet kicked at the water. "The Date clan and Mogami have stopped moving. But based on some observations, there are occasional massive thunder clouds at night so aerial ships cannot pass through. Also..."

"Also?"

"Judge. This is an unrelated matter, but both Date and Mogami sent out a ship bearing signs of mourning. They were both sent south, toward Azuchi Castle."

"Date and Mogami sent someone who died to Hashiba? Did someone have to take responsibility when faced with the threat of Hashiba?"

"I don't know." The sheet swayed gently to the side. "But Hashiba's forces responded by sending a ship to Kantou. Are you familiar with the Jurakudai? That castle belongs to Hashiba Hidetsugu, Hashiba's nephew whose name had supposedly not been inherited yet. In other words..."

"Don't say it all. Someone has inherited the name of Hashiba Hidetsugu."

The body pillow's words suddenly grew icy.

"I see," he said before slowly turning toward the sheet. "You understand, don't you? Ha ha. This is very dangerous."

"Yes. This is quite dangerous, but it is also a chance to influence some great historical upheaval."

"Ha ha ha." The body pillow bent over in laughter. "Is this Hashiba's thoughtfulness or thoughtlessness? Either way, history is on the move and Hashiba has a blade against Date and Mogami's throats. Masazumi and the others have their work cut out for them."

"Judge. Based on my investigation, if you include that fox woman's movements, this is actually the opposite-..."

As soon as he said that, something flew their way from the north.

"Oh?"

It was a purifying attack using an exorcism arrow.

The sheet and body pillow rapidly went on the defensive and stomped their feet as the glowing attack arrived.

“Seppuku Barrier!!!”

Then their air holes exchanged a glance.

“Run away!!”

It exploded.



“Did you get them, Asama?”

After leaving the first land port’s forest on Mito land, Masazumi was blinded by the bright sunlight.

When she called to the archer in a summer uniform who stood on the grass up ahead, that other girl tilted her head while finishing her follow-through. Her Mouse, Hanami, and her own black hair fluttered in the slight breeze.

“Hmm. The homing doesn’t seem to work well when you don’t know their identity. I blew away everything in the area, but it’s hard to say I actually hit them. We need to check the corpses.”

“Judge. Sorry about all the trouble. The residents reported some white figures dancing in the temporary government building. ...I assume it’s some new kind of mysterious phenomenon.”

“Agreed. With the remodeling of the Musashi and the cities split up, our shrine’s divine protection is split between them too. We’re managing with some help from the local Kashima Shrine, though.”

Asama nodded, folded up her bow, and stowed it inside her side skirt through the slit.

We sure have been busy since changing to our summer uniforms, thought Masazumi as she watched.

Then again, the only difference for Masazumi was the lack of a coat and the short sleeves.

However, she had worn a boy’s inner suit for previous years, so she had had some extra room around the chest and had worn pants.

...The boy’s one always felt drafty, but the girl’s one feels chilly in its own more sudden way.

The girl’s suit was fit to her body, so she could feel her sweaty skin cooled by the air. The temperature difference between sun and shade was much more noticeable this way.

...Mukai can sense the temperature around her as well as the sound, but is that due to this inner suit?

She wondered if it bothered any of the others as she looked over at Asama.

“Now, let’s go check the site of the blast.”

“Yes,” agreed Asama just as someone else stepped between the two of them.

Masazumi voiced her surprise at the sudden appearance, but this new figure only brushed her plentiful silver hair back into place. Then she turned her gold eyes toward Masazumi.

“I, 5th Special Duty Officer Nate Mitotsudaira, am here to protect you, Vice President. ...This may be my territory, but aren’t we acting a little too freely?”

Mitotsudaira’s warning was given with a bitter smile in her voice. The chain-supplying obelisks were attached to the hard points on either side of her waist and she shrugged while looking to both Asama and Masazumi.

“Then again, it is important to show off that the Vice President and the Asama Shrine are working to maintain peace. According to Neshinbara, the drop in the Student Council’s approval rating is showing signs of stopping.”

“That’s because everything that’s making it drop is over now. Now it will naturally recover, starting from the areas of economic activity.”

“Heh heh. You learned that from Heidi, didn’t you?”

“I’m busy, so I choose to rely on anyone I can.”

Masazumi took a breath and pointed toward the site of destruction on the southern end of the waterway. Mitotsudaira started forward, Asama followed, and she took the rear.

They began to walk.

The site Masazumi found was less damaged than expected.

“I detonated it in midair, so the stream shouldn’t have been damaged. It only took out some of the grass.”

“There’s only two centimeters of grass on the river bank.”

Masazumi did not entirely understand, but based on Mitotsudaira’s expression that must have been impressive accuracy.

At any rate, Asama covered her right eye and checked around with her false eye while Mitotsudaira began to wiggle her nose. Meanwhile, Masazumi had nothing to do but look around.

...This is a pretty large area of land.

All of the land, including the land ports, belonged to Mito Matsudaira and thus Mitotsudaira. The land had not been well taken care of since Mitotsudaira lived in Musashi, but they were using it now after maintaining it.

The Testament Union recognized the land as Mito Matsudaira land, so it was actually land from after the Matsudaira clan's reign began, but...

...That means Hashiba can't easily interfere since she's from a previous era.

That was partially why they had escaped to Mito.

It felt like they were abusing their connections, but Masazumi shuddered when she considered what would have happened without Mitotsudaira. Mitotsudaira simply smiled bitterly, but...

"It's a pretty good solution for us."

Masazumi felt like she was doing nothing but rely on others, but her job was to make political decisions and negotiate. With no way to negotiate with Oushuu or Sviet Rus, she was of secondary importance.

She approached enough to catch the scent of Mitotsudaira's hair.

"By the way, how are the appeals from the different ships going?"

"Eh? Oh, right. Mary and the 1st Special Duty Officer are scheduled to go around this afternoon. Those two should be able to listen to the representatives of the ships' residents well enough."

"Judge. If it was me, I'd probably try to dissuade them on the spot."

Masazumi heard two bitter laughs and felt a slight warmth in her cheeks. She told herself to assume it meant they understood her, but it also felt like they were treating her like a child.

"I wonder if I'm using Mary here. She does seem like the best person for the job, though."

Asama turned her way.

“I think Mary was delighted to be made the 1st Special Duty Officer’s aide.”

“Judge. I know that, but there’s a subjective and an objective way of looking at it.”

“Then,” said Mitotsudaira. “Stop using a negative subjective way of looking at it, Masazumi.”

Mitotsudaira remained facing forward as she spoke without a smile on her serious expression.

“Leave anything negative to our king.”

To him? thought Masazumi. But at the same time...

“...Our king, huh?”

Aoi seemed the same as always. He was always smiling, doing stupid things, and half-helping half-hindering people’s work. He did have a way of helping people relax, but that was the same as always too. Yet she always thought the same thing when she looked at him.

...You need to pull yourself together.

She thought that to herself, not to the idiot.

Aoi had admonished her during the Battle of Mikatagahara. He had said she was not her usual self.

Since then, she had not had a chance to test her usual self.

And the fact that they had lost the battle weighed on her heart.

She understood. Everyone was continuing their usual lives by remodeling the Musashi or living at the land ports and there were few complaints, but that was because they had a goal and because they were simply keeping their worries unsaid. So...

“I need to pull myself together.”

She knew she would find herself at the negotiating table or in a meeting once more. And once that happened, she wanted to avoid doing anything like what Aoi had admonished her about.

...And what about you?

That idiot had supported her and pulled her along at Mikawa, so what did he think about their loss at Mikatagahara?

She wanted to ask if she could, but first...

"I need to do what I can. ...First comes the remodeling of the Musashi and the return to the international stage."

Meanwhile, the wind blew in. It was a slight breeze from the mountains. She felt its chilliness through her hair and summer uniform, but...

...What is this?

She could not put it in words, but something still seemed different in the bottom of her heart.

She wanted something other than this cool breeze.

She had been busy and had gotten little sleep since Mikatagahara, but this still was not it.

...What is it?

What should she do about her stewing self and what should she think about the others?

She did not want a cool breeze, so...

"I..."

"Eh?"

Asama turned around in surprise and Masazumi quickly swallowed her words, but Asama simply tilted her head.

"What's the matter, Masazumi? Did you go crazy again?"

"What do you mean 'again'!?"

And don't look so disturbed, Mitotsudaira.

But before anyone else could react, two forms stepped out from the grass remaining to the south.

"Oh, dad? And Konishi-sama?"

Asama saw Masazumi correct her posture. She placed a hand on her chest and lowered her head.

“We had heard two beings thought to be mysterious phenomena had fled here from the temporary Provisional Council building. Are the two of you all right?”

“Masazumi, use your brain. Why do you think we are here?”

Masazumi’s father grabbed the cigar in his mouth and blew out a sharp line of smoke. Mitotsudaira stepped back a bit from the scent of the smoke and Konishi crossed his arms.

“We were pursuing those very beings.”

“Eh? Th-then you weren’t caught in that blast were you?”

No, think carefully, Asama Tomo. If they had been, they wouldn’t be speaking with us right now. That’s just how serious I was. Yes. So I need to give them a salesman’s smile.

“Of course you weren’t caught in the blast! Yes, that couldn’t possibly have affected you! I would never carelessly fail to check where I was shooting or anything! Let’s just go with that!”

The two adults gave her expressionless looks.

“...”

Owww!! This silence is painful!!!!

As a dangerous sweat poured down Asama’s face, Masazumi’s father suddenly turned toward his daughter.

“Anyway, it seems those mysterious phenomena have vanished. You can exterminate them some other time.”

“Judge.” Masazumi nodded. “The two of you are very important, so please do not push yourselves too hard.”

“Ha ha. No need to worry, Masazumi. We were students once, you know?”

That’s true, thought Asama. One’s student life ended at eighteen in the Far East, but if those two had been in a position to reach the Provisional Council...

...They must have been plenty powerful as students.

She nodded and spoke her conclusion.

“Yes. So in other words, I don’t have to worry about firing on the two of you in the future.”

They don’t look happy, but doesn’t that contradict what they just said? Yes. And don’t you give me the same look, Mito and Masazumi.

I’d better change the subject.

“So you say the mysterious phenomena have vanished? I’ll have to finish them off next time.”

“Um, Tomo? You seem to be in a good mood, but if we’re done here, shouldn’t we head back?”

“Eh? Oh, right, right. Let’s head back.”

The two adults nodded and said “judge”, but Masazumi’s father suddenly spoke up.

“Masazumi, if you tell the people we dealt with the situation on your orders, you can score some points.”

“Judge. I’ll do that. Also...”

Masazumi looked up to the east.

A moment later, a large humanoid form flew by with the wind.

It flew down nearby, so Asama looked up in surprise to see a heavy God of War with a blue dog’s face. The wings on the back remained open and a sign frame appeared next to the face.

The sign frame displayed the virtual cockpit and a long-lived girl. She appeared to be sitting in a small Far Eastern-style room and Masazumi nodded toward her.

“How are you doing, Satomi Student Council President?”

“You can call me Yoshiyasu if you want. ...Righteousness is doing really well. Hurry onboard. The Student Council room has apparently been cleaned up, so they want you to check over it during the lunch break.”

The Student Council room? wondered Asama with a tilt of the head, but she quickly remembered where that was.

“Oh, that room right above the academy’s main entrance. That’s where Toori would stand naked in the window drinking milk in the mornings. That probably was pretty filthy.”

“Tomo! Tomo! That’s the room we’re going to be using at school from now on!”

Yes! A new purification job! she celebrated in her heart, but then she looked to Masazumi.

She saw the tension leave the girl’s eyebrows.

“Are you feeling better?”

“Right now, it’s important to have a place of our own. ...Now, then.”

Masazumi stepped up onto the outstretched hand of Yoshiyasu’s God of War.

Suddenly, a sign frame appeared next to her face.

Marube-ya: “Masazumi? It’s Heidi. I just received word through some trade connections that the Date clan wants to hold a secret meeting.”

“What?” said Masazumi while glancing over at her father and Konishi. Her father nodded back and pointed into the sky where the Ariake had to be.

“Hurry on back. We can no longer take things easy. The situation surrounding Oushuu, Russia, Kantou, and most importantly Musashi, has begun to move all at once. First, you must take on Oushuu, the land that experienced the conflict from the Age of Dawn and is now a solid rock of resistance and talking things out.”

“This isn’t going to be easy if we have to deal with Sviet Rus at the same time.”

“Ho ho.” Konishi laughed quietly and placed a hand on the side of his mouth. “To face P.A. Oda, Uesugi has gone through internal reform and placed ‘Man of Love’ Naoe Kanetsugu as their Vice Chancellor and Vice President. ...And to face Date and Mogami, they have placed the brave general Honjou Shigenaga as their 2nd Special Duty Officer. But the real problem lies within.”

“You mean...?”

The look in Mitotsudaira’s eyes said “people who talk this much can’t hide anything, can they?”, but Konishi probably knew that perfectly well. He then pointed northwest.

“Listen. Novgorod is a large floating city like IZUMO located in west Sviet Rus. Eight years ago, Sviet Rus Chancellor Ivan the Terrible carried out a great purge there and the Musashi has not visited since. ...But that city is clashing with Shibata’s P.A. Oda forces.”

“So if we get involved with Oushuu and Sviet Rus, we might have to deal with Shibata’s forces too?”

“Most likely. I also have word that the Jurakudai, castle of Hashiba Hidetsugu whose name shouldn’t have been inherited yet, has arrived in Edo. ...Well, do your best, I suppose.”

“Judge.” Masazumi nodded. “Thank you for all the important information.”

She gave a quick bow, so the other two girls did as well.

“We’ll be going.”

“Yes. This land has a history of resistance. You should proceed carefully.”

Masazumi heard those words from her father.

This was not something he had done in the past, so she wondered if it meant he recognized her skill a little now.

...No, I still have a long way to go. He might be trying to help me out because of that. After all, Musashi still hasn’t left the shadow of our loss at Mikatagahara.

Once they returned to the Ariake, they would find the Musashi being remodeled, the working people, and their training classmates.

Let’s get back, she thought. She wanted to get back and begin searching for the way to recovery. And she wanted to check on this secret meeting with the Date clan that could help them find that way.

“Let’s go home, Asama, Mitotsudaira, and Satomi President. ...And for now, that means the Ariake.”

The idiot would be waiting for them too.

He was their king.

And he was a king who she had worried when she was supposed to be supporting him.

Chapter 1: Anticipaters of Unseen Footing

第一章

『不明足場の先見者達』



足下が不確かでも
見える水平がいつも通りならば
配点（押さえ込み）

Even if your footing is uncertain

You are fine as long as the horizontal remains level

Point Allocation (Restraint)

The afternoon sun was artificially created in a certain place.

That place was the vast interior of the Ariake. The metal space was large enough that the four walls looked hazy in the distance.

It was longer lengthwise than widthwise and eight docks were carved into it. On the docks sat massive Goliath cranes and girders even larger than the cranes; and each one contained a ship bearing the name “Musashi” followed by an individual name.

The Ariake had no windows. Instead, sign frames displaying the view outside were lined up along the ceiling, walls, and around the docks. Artificial environmental light based on the time of day outside was created by lamp spells.

As the Musashi was remodeled within, the Ariake contained the light of an early summer evening.

Most of the sounds inside were from moving cranes, or linked wagons carrying materials, or from the work taking place between the canopies covering parts of the ships or inside the wooden prefab construction buildings.

There were sounds of hammering, welding, saws, drills, and cargo being set down or dragged. There were also the occasional cheers when some piece of work was completed.

But another sound was added in.

It came from the rear of Okutama which had a few wide blocks removed and had holes filling its surface. Musashi Ariadust Academy’s bell was ringing.

It was already past time for school to be let out, so this bell was informing the ship that it was now 5:00 PM.

The artificial light illuminating it from overhead gradually began to dim, but the sounds of work continued. No one went home or even grabbed an early dinner.

If anyone did leave, it was to buy some food for the entire group they were working with.

They all stubbornly remained at the work sites.

“Hey, you got a moment?”

A certain conversation would occasionally begin at one of the work sites. Even if no one said “yes”, the person would continue as if asking themselves.

“We can win once we finish this, can’t we?”

They would receive a few different answers, but the most common were the following two: “Of course we can. What are you talking about?”

“Stop thinking about that and just do your duty.”

Sometimes the other person would reply with a silent bitter smile or try to avoid the issue with a joke, but it always ended in the same way: “If we don’t do whatever we can, we’ll regret it later.”

“Yeah.”

Then, they would begin to chat. They would distract themselves from what lay ahead and what future awaited them, but they would keep those things in the corner of their vision.

Once a certain place started chatting, people found it hard to leave; so they all ended up chatting cheerfully.

“Hey, did Satomi’s Student Council President end up transferring in?”

“I always thought we had the same taste, but it looks like I was wrong.”

“I-I didn’t mean it like that! Wait, are you making crazy accusations in a plot to steal my AsaShoots collection!?”

“Hey, could you two quit drawing swords on each other and help carry these materials?”

As that conversation played out on Takao’s surface, a light God of War activated.

“Okay, East Ship Team 3B-26. Let’s go!”

They all followed the God of War and climbed from its tail ballast to its head.

“Hey.”

Their conversations always started with that word.

“The Satomi Student Council President sure is great, isn’t she?”

“What!? You aren’t overlooking the perfection in glasses that’s a year older and maybe even flatter, are you!?”

“But Naomasa’s been in the engine division so much lately that my points in the large religion nearly got to the point of a class change. I’ve been playing this minigame in between trips to carry supplies to her unit. This Musashi remodeling minigame sure has a lot to it. You just keep playing and playing, but it never ends.”

“Chief! Everyone but me is dangerous!”

But once they arrived on top of the dock, they all looked around.

The Musashi’s ships rose higher than the dock’s floor, but...

“About twenty percent to go. ...We need to hurry up and stuff everything inside.”

They were definitely making progress on the remodeling and they could hear sounds of construction even now, but...

“We’re gradually focusing more on the most important parts. Is this what you call the last spurt?”

So...

“What do we do?”

“Yeah, what do we do once the remodeling is done? We need to figure that out pretty soon.”

As soon as someone said that, two objects passed by far overhead. They were people.

“The Tachibana couple? They go for a run while fighting each other every morning and evening, don’t they?”

Recently, Tachibana Muneshige had decided to eat dinner outside.

Their residence in Musashi was on Tama's second belowground floor. That was a part of the student dorms and the next wide block to the right was an underground nature district. The English Queen and the 1st Special Duty Officer lived nearby, so they got along with the neighbors well enough.

...It is such a nice place.

But they had something to do besides spend their time there.

This was not training. It was a form of discipline.

They were eighty meters up from the dock's floor off the starboard side of Musashino, Musashi's front central ship.

Muneshige was going through rehabilitation with Gin's help. He checked the feel of his legs as he ran on the reinforced wooden deck, clashed pieces of metal shaped like swords with Gin, and held combat training as sparks flew.

"..."

But as he ran alongside and exchanged attacks with Gin, Muneshige consciously held back his body that wanted to test his full strength.

He had not fully recovered yet. His muscles had not returned to their pre-Mikawa levels. If he tried to use his full strength now, the discrepancy between his memories and the present reality would place an unnecessary burden on him and confuse him. So...

...I will hold back!

Impatience stewed inside his body, but he tamed it by telling himself he was controlling himself. If he could control himself, recovery would be a simple task.

He ran. He jumped over one of Gin's attacks, flipped to avoid it, and sent out his own attack.

Even if they were only going for a run, Gin showed no restraint in her attacks. If he let his guard down for even a moment, attacks quick enough to leave him with a new injury would fly accurately into the places where he knew he was

weak.

She only did so because she trusted him and because she was trying to rid him of his weaknesses.

...And because she wants me to...

She wanted to return him to his position as the Peerless in the West.

And because he understood that, he did not go easy on her.

With each and every step, his footsteps traveled up his entire body and he spoke the words that came most naturally to him.

“Gin.”

“What is it, Master Muneshige?”

“Compared to when I could barely move, I am incredibly happy now.”

“You have not recovered yet. You still have a stiffness in your step.”

“Oops.”

He made sure to step rather than just let his foot drop. And as soon as he took a leap, a metal sword pierced the spot in which his foot had been.

“My attack was too slow because I warned you first,” Gin was entirely expressionless. “I have room for improvement too.”

She wore a vermilion track suit and gave a small nod.

“But I agree that this is a happy time.”

“Judge.”

Muneshige nodded in agreement, avoided an attack to his head, and reminded himself that victory was the only option from now on. After all...

...This is the Far East and Musashi's last chance.

Musashi lost so much during the Battle of Mikatagahara three weeks ago, thought Muneshige.

Hashiba had sent Azuchi Castle to Kantou and it was still sitting above Edo and

Satomi. That giant aerial warship belonged to the same class as the Musashi and it was holding southern Kantou while receiving supplies from Sagami.

...You could probably say it's in top form.

Meanwhile, the Musashi sat above the territory belonging to 5th Special Duty Officer Mitotsudaira's clan. It was inside the Ariake, a giant dock designed specifically for the Musashi that had created a stealth defense barrier around itself.

The residential districts had been rearranged into transport ships and most of Musashi's residents were living at the land ports in Mito territory. The eight ships had been split up between the eight land ports, so...

...The people can't set up a chain of dissatisfaction or plot to rebel.

"But," muttered Muneshige to no one in particular as he ran and deflected Gin's jab with the pommel of his sword. "This is their last chance."

The same could be said of the members of Class Plum. Given the situation, they were all moving around busily, but each one of them would occasionally stare into the south even though there was nothing to see there.

Muneshige had grown accustomed enough to life on these eight ships that he hoped that was a sign of their will to fight Hashiba and not of their fear.

But it was true this was their last chance. And so they kept moving. Gin had only been using one hand before, but she finally moved her second to send out both her metal swords at once. And so Muneshige deflected them with both of his.

The two of them were moving as well.

But even if they were moving, it was not actual movement. Their current movements were preparations to ensure they won once they did take actual movement. That was what they had to do now, so...

"Gin, pour on the killer intent."

"Judge."

Gin nodded, narrowed her eyes, and sent out constant attacks.

These were not gentle attacks. They were serious attacks that targeted his legs when he landed or the backs of his joints. Muneshige avoided or dealt with them all.

“Nice killer intent, Gin!”

She smiled. It was a cold smile filled with killer intent.

Wonderful, thought Muneshige. He had not had many chances to see that look on her face since they had started living together, so he was truly glad they had moved to Musashi.

He felt real accomplishment as he ran, leaped, and moved his body. This would continue even after they returned home. They would read books or divine websites on cutting edge combat techniques and check on the most cutting edge weapons.

...Yes, I am so thankful we have so much to do.

All of them had lots to do. Those repairing the Musashi were pursuing that, those supporting the first group were pursuing that, and those “keeping the Musashi moving” were pursuing that.

It all went back to three weeks prior.

Muneshige had seen something during that loss three weeks ago, although he was not sure if it was a good thing or not.

These were the people who were moving the current world, but he had seen them desire even more and pursue themselves.

Muneshige had once been an inherited name holder like them.

He was not any longer.

Would he be able to become like that again? Would he be able to do something like that or do something even greater? He restrained his doubts with the sensation of his feet pressing against the ground.

He used his mind to restrain his stewing body and he used his body to restrain his stewing mind. And as he repeated that process...

“Gin.”

“What is it?”

“I will grow even stronger than before. Just like when I confessed to you.”

“That was not so much ‘growing strong’ as it was ‘refusing to give up until you won’.”

“That had not occurred to me.”

“You were so strong it did not need to occur to you.”

She nodded, suddenly put away her swords, and lined up alongside him. She then opened the wicker basket attached to her waist and showed him the water bottle and rice balls wrapped in bamboo grass contained inside.

“Master Muneshige, it is about time for dinner.”

Gin picked up the wrapping with her giant false arm.

These were special rice balls. She had not made them with these false arms. Before Muneshige had woken that morning, she had brought out the false arms based on her original arms and made them.

She felt she should not hide those arms from him since he had given them to her and she had used them in her battle with Musashi’s Vice Chancellor. The arms were beginning to feel less special to her, but...

...Am I being oversensitive when I hesitate to use them in public?

But since they and Musashi were coming up on their last chance, hesitating to use anything available to her would be dangerous. So she was gradually trying to accustom herself to using them in public, but she could not change the part of her that still needed a reason to use them.

...So it is all for Master Muneshige.

He made for the all-purpose excuse.

...I would expect no less of Master Muneshige.

Currently, she used those false arms for combat and rice ball making, but she felt that was evidence of the changing nature of all things. All things and people would sometimes do what one expected and other times would not. Her

relationship with him was a perfect example. The future destined for her by her inherited name had greatly changed with his interference and Musashi's interference, but...

"Today, I mostly made the soft-boiled egg and chicken ham rice balls you like so much."

"Are you sure you should have done that? The egg supply is pretty limited."

"Please thank me."

"Judge. Thank you very much. ...I can't wait to try them."

"Judge." Gin nodded and glanced around the area. "About what the 1st Special Duty Officer contacted us about..."

"Judge. I wasn't sure whether he should have told us about that. ...It sounds like things are finally beginning to move. A representative of the Date clan will arrive tonight for an unofficial meeting."

"Judge. And we were all asked to gather tonight in preparation. Master Muneshige, does this mean we are one of them now? I do not recall giving our consent."

"I have a feeling those people think everyone is one of them."

"True."

Gin sighed because she could not understand that way of thinking.

But as she recalled the information on the surrounding nations she and Muneshige had been gathering lately, she raised her head as emotion filled her face.

"Oushuu had its foundation in Qing-Takeda's power and in the stability Matsudaira will bring in the future, so they had completed their history recreations in a relatively peaceful manner that nearly qualifies as a mere discussion. But..."

"But the Mogami clan in west Oushuu, Date in the east, and Sviet Rus have all stopped everything they were doing."

That had happened only a few days before. As Gin ran, she looked up at the

sign frame reproducing the external light.

“That means Oushuu has cast aside its trust in Matsudaira’s future stability after the loss three weeks ago.”

“It means the real history recreation and the real Warring States era has arrived in Oushuu.” Muneshige smiled. “So now it’s our turn to crush the future someone thought was set in stone.”

He had once done exactly that to her, so she could only trust him when he said that.

Gin took a slow breath and nodded once to convince herself.

“Then let us eat dinner.”

With that, she placed the water bottle and bamboo grass wrapping on her false arm.

“...!”

And she forcefully threw them high into the air ahead of her.

Muneshige saw his dinner hang in the air for an impressively long time.

The throw from Gin’s false arm refused to fall back down. Meanwhile, he nodded her way.

“Please go on ahead, Gin.”

“Judge. I have my own route, so go on without me, Master Muneshige. I need to greet a few people afterwards, though.”

When he spotted some sweat on her brow, he smiled her way.

“I told you to go on without me, Master Muneshige.”

“Oh, I was just realizing how lucky I was to have moved here since it lets me see you so full of life, Gin.”

She wrinkled her brow, but her mouth moved in a slight wave. Her cheeks also flushed.

“I should have thrown it so high and far you couldn’t see it.”

“Not to worry. I have excellent eyesight.”

“I wouldn’t know.”

But then she nodded again and jumped to the right.

She did not hesitate to throw herself into the air at a height of eighty meters.

As she fell, she stretched out and gave a midair bow to the transport Technohexen flying by.

And then...

...Arcabuz Cruz.

She fired blanks to launch her body through the air. She directed herself to the thick rope passageway leading starboard to Tama.

At the same time, Muneshige began to run.

He did not use his full strength. He focused on the soles of his feet and took each step with care. First, he set his heel down, bent his knee, and pulled his body forward. Then, as he tilted his balance forward, he would use the arch of his sole to stand on his tiptoe. From there, he would place his big toe on the floor and press down like he was tearing into the floor.

“...!”

He filled himself with reliable acceleration.

Without rushing or hurrying, Muneshige simply accelerated forward as if memorizing each and every step.

He could see the transportation district on the port-most long block to his left.

His dinner was falling and...

...It is falling off the edge of the ship.

That was too far to reach and there were no thick rope passageways in the area.

“I’ll have to go for some interesting footing on this one. I would expect no less of Gin.”

He accelerated and leaped.

He lifted his left leg and jumped.

His initial destination was the first floor roof of a warehouse in the transportation district. First, he placed his left leg on a small wooden box left on the ground and used it as a stepping stone.

“...”

As if stepping over it, he leaped toward the warehouse roof.

He made a midair flip as he passed over the heads of the transportation workers helping with the remodeling.

“Excuse me.”

He raised a hand of greeting as they gave shouts of “Oh!” or “That’s amazing!” and he landed on the rooftop.

He used the motion of his landing to briefly sink forward and used his body like a spring.

He felt the momentum building in his body.

“Toh.”

So he kicked sideways and made another flip in midair. Just as his feet circled downwards again, he leaped toward the third floor rooftop of the warehouse across the way.

He landed, leaned forward, moved his right leg forward, and ran across the roof toward his dinner.

He did not stop and he quickly reached the edge of the roof leading toward the edge of the ship.

“Now, then.”

He jumped from the elevated roof and flung himself into the empty space beyond the ship’s edge.

Everything vanished below his feet and the movement of the wind changed.

This was a dangerous action, but it felt almost nostalgic to him.

...I helped prepare the Grande y Felicísima Armada after all."

Knowing how to move between ships in a large fleet and being trained in naval hand-to-hand combat were both necessary for Tres España and their history recreation of the Armada Battle.

He reached a hand out in midair while recalling older times.

The dinner Gin had made was there.

He reached it, grabbed it, opened the bamboo grass wrapping as he pulled it in, grabbed one of the handmade rice balls, and put it in his mouth.

...Oh, soy sauce tortilla flavor.

Wonderful, he felt while flipping around in midair and pointing his legs downward. He maintained a falling stance as he dropped toward his destination.

"Excuse me."

A tugboat was there in order to move transport ships alongside the Musashi. Gin had likely thrown his dinner only after noticing the boat's presence. Muneshige landed on the Shinto rope that provided shock absorption on the sides of the bow and he crouched down to prepare for his next jump.

"Thank you very much."

He raised a hand in response to the crews' raised hands and he made his jump. His target was Musashino's outer hull.

...I need to land on the wall and then...

He had to run up it. The 1st Special Duty Officer had taught him this form of training and he had improved enough to pull this off. However...

"Oh?"

He spotted a familiar face on the work scaffolding halfway up Musashino's hull.

It was Honda Futayo.

Futayo placed a foot on Musashino's wall-like outer hull.

She was forty meters from the deck at the top, so if she was to climb that height with only her feet...

...It truly becomes a "wall" at about the ten meter mark.

But...

"That means I cannot actually climb this wall."

If she could not climb the wall after losing her initial speed, that meant she could not climb or balance on the wall with only her initial kick.

It sounded simple, but it was actually quite difficult. The ninja who had taught it to her had raised his index finger and told her the following: "Muneshige-dono trains this way every single day."

It had sounded like something from a bogus mail-order advertisement. But...

"———"

She looked up and really did see Muneshige there.

Futayo watched Muneshige.

...It looks like he jumped to the wall from that tugboat passing by overhead.

He was approximately fifteen meters above her.

He placed one foot above the other on the wall and stood there. He was looking at her, but he was not looking down on her. He turned his definite gaze in her direction.

Was she being conceited if it looked like he was challenging her to climb up after him?

She had planned to climb the wall regardless.

She wanted to train. She was always completing her own sort of training, but she had recently started wondering if she should try adding on some different or extra training, whatever that might be.

But she was not sure what kind of training she should add on. Part of her felt she could add on a few more programs derived from her normal training, but...

...Would that really work?

She was not sure how to put it.

...What can I do to get stronger? That was a vague question. She did not know what it was she lacked.

She knew she had to avoid any training that had no direct connection to her strength. Her time as the Far East's Vice Chancellor and the time Musashi would remain safe were both short. So she had asked the ninja. She had asked him to tell her what kind of training Muneshige and Gin did, since she had fought both of them.

“————”

Futayo looked up. Muneshige stood fifteen meters above her and he was looking at her.

If it was only due to her conceit that he seemed to be challenging her, then why was he looking at her?

She did not know, but...

“Here I come.”

She filled herself with initial speed.

Muneshige saw Futayo coming up.

She's serious, was his initial impression.

Her acceleration spell, Soaring Wings, purified away everything extraneous to her acceleration, but it was not active at the moment. She intended to make the climb with her pure strength and skill.

And she started up.

She rose with the speed of a fall.

She immediately covered about seven meters. She seemed within arm's reach, but that was an optical illusion. The speed of her approach had caused an error in his judgment of her position relative to his.

But she was definitely approaching.

She placed her feet on the wall and let her knees sink forwards to press her weight against the wall.

“Hoo.”

With a single breath, she relaxed her strength and pulled her body up with the foot caught on the wall. Instead of kicking down, she needed to pull herself up.

She covered three more meters with a single step, so she would reach Muneshige in another two steps.

So he began as well.

...Now, then.

He could not just watch. This was his time to train.

When he had noticed her and realized what she was trying to do, he had felt something.

If he had spoken that feeling aloud, it could easily have been viewed as conceit, so he had left it unsaid and sealed it deep in his heart.

He knew what he needed to do now.

“...!”

He began running up the wall as a standard part of his training.

Futayo saw Muneshige start climbing up ahead.

He seemed to be testing her, he seemed to be ignoring her, and he seemed to be telling her to follow him.

...And...

She did not understand, but she did know that the person running out ahead of her had held an inherited name.

She thought on the term “inherited name”.

She had fought inherited name holders a few times and had barely scraped by

with victory. Her father had held an inherited name and he had trained her and taught her quite a bit. But...

...What does it mean?

She asked herself what meaning an inherited name held.

Until recently, Futayo had thought of inherited names as the textbooks had taught her to.

According to the textbooks, their holders bore the responsibility to move history and the world. Her father had held one, so she had seen that for herself several times. They lived according to the history recorded in the automatically-updated history book known as the Testament.

Recreating the Testament's history was everything to them.

The Testament's history was long.

...Long ago.

When the people had descended to this planet, every part of the world save the Far East where the Environmental Gods were had been given too great a recovery; so the Far East had been the only livable place. So the people had started a war over that land and nearly wiped themselves out again. Having learned their lesson, the people had known they could not leave the state of the world to people and had decided to obey proven history instead. That was what Futayo had been taught in class.

The rules concerning inherited names had been developed back then. And when they had made the Testament to provide instructions, they had made sure it automatically revealed only the next hundred years of history to make sure no one tried to get their hands on too much power.

That way, the people could once more develop to the point of ascending to heaven without destroying themselves.

That was known as the Anti-Decline Pro-Tuning Movement and, due to the environmental issues, another Far East in an alternate space had been created. Everyone but the Far Easterners had moved to that Harmonic World and fulfilled

the Testament's instructions there.

And before history was enclosed within the Testament, the different copies had been distributed to those that were determined to be the ancestors of what would become great nations in the future. That way, the inherited name holders could fulfill their duty to protect the world and to help it redevelop.

Futayo had once asked her father why they even bothered going through with the inherited names and history recreation. She had asked why they didn't focus on technological development so they could ascend to heaven as soon as possible.

This had been her father's answer:

"Hey, Kazuno, why is that?"

...My father truly was honest about the things he did not know.

After Kazuno had given her father a look of pure scorn, she had sat politely down and said the following: "Any kind of competition brings conflict. And some people were in better positions than others. After all, the Far East was the only safe land. Everywhere else had been so recovered so much that no one could live there anymore."

"Couldn't they have all worked together?"

"That's a good question, Futayo. I was thinking the same thing, Kazuno. ... Wait, why are you only glaring at me!?"

"Futayo-sama." Kazuno had gestured toward Futayo's father. "Even this house has a head of the household. Technically."

"Judge. That would be my father."

"Judge. Now, Futayo-sama. If everyone were to work together in a single group with the fate of the world at stake, how would they select the 'head of the household'? And even if they found a way, would everyone really be satisfied with that selection? Would everyone feel confident that selection would allow them to ascend into heaven? And..."

And...

"The technological development would surely take many generations of work.

But if they had to select a ‘head of the household’ for their group, could they really continue to select a satisfactory individual for generations?”

“They wouldn’t know until they tried...”

At that point, it had hit her.

If they had tried that, it would have caused conflict and they would have wiped each other out. When she had trailed off, Kazuno had given her a rare smile.

“Do you understand now? Out of a sense of responsibility for the future generations, the people back then cast aside their ambitions to name themselves the leader and instead left their fate in the hands of something else. They decided to reference the history of the past age, when the people truly did ascend into heaven.”

That was the basis on which her father and the others had been moving the world.

Her father’s friends in Mikawa, the automatons with inherited names, and everyone else had done so. But...

...Why?

The destruction of Mikawa that had taken her father away had not been a part of the history recreation. What had they been thinking? And...

“————”

Futayo thought about her father who had opposed the history recreation and about those who had obeyed it.

...They’re gone.

Anne and Luynes of Hexagone Française, Matsunaga of P.A. Oda, Yoshitsune of Qing-Takeda, and Yoshiyori of Satomi had either obeyed or disobeyed the history recreation, but their decisions had all led them to disappear as her father had.

...What does it mean?

Inherited name holders were supposed to have a responsibility to obey the Testament and move both history and the world, but...

“What does it mean?”

Futayo asked a question under her breath as she watched the back of the former inherited name holder moving up ahead.

“When one inherits a name and follows the world and its history,” she asked. “Is their death assumed?”

Futayo accelerated.

She swung her body upwards to run straight up the wall.

She could see Muneshige’s back up ahead.

She could catch up. She only needed to move a little further. But she felt heavy. The object in her right hand felt heavy.

It was not Tonbokiri. It was a spare provided by Kantou IZUMO. It artificially reproduced the weapon’s functions and its artificial intelligence was only based on the original.

However, its weight and the distribution thereof were identical to the real one.

...Even though it is a fake.

It was a fake, yet the weight alone was real.

...It’s almost like...

What was it like? The thought reached her for just a moment.

“—————”

And in that moment, her feet failed to grasp the wall.

“...”

Balanced on her heels, her body bent back on the wall.

She could not recover.

She was going to fall with her back pointed down.

“Kh...”

In that instant, Muneshige looked back.

He reached out his hand and she tried to grab it.

...No.

She did not know what she was rejecting, but that thought definitely reached her.

And a moment later, she fell.

She had failed.

Gin saw it happen from Tama's port deck after crossing the thick rope passageway.

Futayo fell and her back slammed into the scaffolding below.

The people on the scaffolding turned around and the tugboat stopped moving, but Muneshige stopped on the wall and raised a hand toward them all.

He was telling them this was just a part of their training. That was true and preserving the reputation of their Vice Chancellor was important for Musashi at the moment. But...

"She has seemed somehow exhausted ever since Mikatagahara."

Gin frowned.

"If this continues, she has no future."

Futayo lay face-up on the scaffolding of hardened bamboo and wooden boards.

She was out of breath and her pulse was racing. Both were caused by this unexpected mistake and by the fear of falling backwards without being able to see where she was headed.

I can't believe this, she thought in the back of her mind.

Something seemed to be catching at her heart and it would occasionally take over her entire body. At the most crucial moments or when she was making a decision, something seemed to cut across in front of her, obscuring her vision.

What was it?

She did not know.

As she lay face-up, she could see Musashino's starboard hull and the Ariake's ceiling supported by trusses. The boards behind her back swayed with her breathing and the pain gradually reached her as heat.

She belatedly realized her hand was touching something.

It was Tonbokiri's spare. It contained the extension capability and had an artificial cutting power that used a spell, but she had yet to use the latter. Its OS was made to be compatible with the real one, and...

...I cannot use this Tonbokiri until it recognizes me as its master.

It was a troublesome authorization function, but restraints like that were necessary for a weapon that could hurt someone. Also, she was currently living in the Ariake rather than facing an enemy.

She intended to eventually have the Tonbo Spare recognize her as its master and then wait for the real one to return. At that point, she had planned to have the spare's memories transferred to the real one so it would know she had never parted with it.

...But will that actually work out?

For some reason, she was not so sure since Mikatagahara.

"Am I...?"

Had she become a coward?

Chapter 2: Hidden One in the Hidden Sky

第二章

『隠れ空の隠れ者』



それは暴風でも
暴力でもなく
配点 (竜)

What is neither a gale

Nor violence?

Point Allocation (Dragon)

Night covered a forest.

It was a summer forest filled with the cries of insects. The two moons in the sky poured pale light between the trees and to the dewy ground. The areas the light did not reach were filled with dark blue shadows.

Something moved within that dark blue.

It kicked off the tree branches and leaves to move quickly yet steadily.

“What do you think’s going on? Why were we sent out to check on Date airspace tonight?”

“Hard to say. But the Date clan has gathered their aerial forces and is doing something in secret. There were also some strange thunder clouds between Date and Kantou earlier. This could be interesting if it’s an experiment for a new kind of stealth or a secret conflict with Mogami. ...I just hope it isn’t really just a thunderstorm.”

“Our teachers chose us for this mission, so if it ends up being weather, it’d make the proud historical names of Sasuke and Saizou weep.”

The speaking form was two yet one. It was made up of a short man in mountain gear and a wind spirit woman leaning against his back.

They were Sarutobi Sasuke and Kirigakure Saizou of Sanada Academy.

They would step onto a branch, crouch down, and then leap forward. As they slipped between the shadowy branches, they would land on a higher branch and fly even further forward.

Saizou stared forward.

“You aren’t going to have anywhere else to climb before long. Also, I can see Yonezawa, so...”

“I doubt they’re running a souvenir shop.”

“Will you buy me something if they are?”

“You’re the one carrying the wallet.”

“It’s the thought that counts.”

Saizou patted him on the back of the shoulder and Sasuke smiled bitterly.

“How about we stop for some ramen at Kitakata on the way back?”

He jumped into the trees at the top of the mountain ridge and Saizou moved to a new branch as if supporting him. The forest leading down to Yonezawa lay before them. And behind them...

“From this height, we should be able to see from Shirakawa to Mito back and to the left. The Musashi would be there.”

“The Ariake is using stealth, so we wouldn’t be able to tell.”

“Then look at Mito. Musashi’s general residents were loaded onto transport ships according to their residence blocks and then sent down to Mito’s land ports. They’re filling up the eight land ports separated by the forest so different nations can use them.”

“Are they splitting up the public opinion about their loss?”

“Weren’t you listening to what our teachers said?”

“Was I wrong?”

“No, you were right, but don’t take that to mean you don’t have to listen.”

“Testament. I was probably distracted with how busy we’ve been recently.”

“Yeah.”

Sasuke nodded in agreement and opened a sign frame while jumping through the air. The clock face drawn in the non-illuminated sign frame said it was 7:00 PM, but...

“Can you see them?”

“Oh, do you mean those?”

Saizou tilted her head and looked south.

Eight small lights were visible beyond the lights of cities and villages far to the

south. The star-like lights were almost weak enough to overlook and they were flickering in the summer night.

Sasuke spoke after staring at the lights for a few seconds.

“A few of the transport ship groups being used as cities must have had an early lights out. Probably less because it’s wartime and more to create a sense of unity among the residents.”

“They sure are putting a lot of effort into this.”

“It’s a city of normal residents. The ships that actually fight are hidden in the Ariake. The student council and chancellor’s officers are apparently living on the Musashi as it’s worked on inside.”

“I guess we’ll be seeing how true that is before long. I just hope they’re doing this right.”

“Yeah.”

Sasuke nodded and moved his gaze from south to north.

He looked down.

He jumped a few trees over to drop by about thirty meters, but...

“Doesn’t look like there’s anything in the sky.”

“Date has a lot of land, so it has a lot of sky too.”

“The sky visible from between the trees looks small enough.”

As soon as Saizou said that, that sky suddenly grew.

With a series of rumbles and sounds of destruction, the forest before them was mowed down.

...What?

While pressing against Sasuke’s back, Saizou felt the moonlight more than the blowing wind or scattering leaves.

As a spirit-type nonhuman, the moonlight gave her power. She trembled as something like heat welled up within her.

“Kh.”

Her mouth loosened and her voice almost escaped, but then Sasuke grabbed her left hand as it sat on his shoulder.

He said nothing, but he leaped to the right and she was pulled after him through the blowing wind.

His movement hid her from the moonlight. He had to have noticed her tense up from the sudden exposure to the moonlight.

At the same time, the broken and felled trees broke and felled even more trees.

That secondary destruction caused a wave of snapping and breaking sounds to race through the forest. Finally, cries of birds and beasts came from between the trees and something could be heard slamming against a group of larger trees.

Something had fallen into the forest.

“Looks like that wasn’t meant for us.”

While pulling on her hand, Sasuke jumped behind the trees on the right.

He pulled her along as she trembled from the moonlight and could not move properly.

She was not the type to apologize, but she did feel she had made a mistake. So she breathed in and pressed against Sasuke’s back again before he could ready himself atop the branch. And...

“What was that?”

“It’s definitely hard to tell just by looking at it.”

They both looked up into the forest’s sky where a strip of trees had been torn down from right to left for a few hundred meters. A flying object had torn through the forest on a shallow falling trajectory.

...Did a ship fall?

As she wondered that, Sasuke circled around the tree so it was positioned between them and the destruction. He stood on the trunk with just his tiptoes and peered out while Saizou held his shoulders from behind.

“Did it crash? Or was it shot down? And what was it that fell anyway?”

“That last one would be the most accurate. Whatever it was simply fell. Most likely anyway. After all...”

Sasuke completely hid behind the tree trunk with her pushing on his back.

Saizou relaxed her body and produced a mist. She turned herself into mist, overlapped her position with Sasuke’s, and placed her hazy hands on his ear and throat.

This let them talk just between the two of them.

“Something’s coming.”

Something did appear in the sky. They were winged Gods of War. There were five in all and each one had the emblem of the Date clan on its shoulder.

But when Sasuke saw the warrior-type God of War with demonic horns in the lead, he frowned.

“Date Academy 2nd Special Duty Officer Oniniwa Tsunamoto’s Sagetsu? I expected someone lower in the pecking order. But we still haven’t found anything worthwhile. ...That previous one really must have only fallen.”

Saizou knew why he said that. Sagetsu’s large spear had no shadows or scratches on it.

“He hasn’t been fighting. ...And there weren’t any sounds of battle when that previous one fell. But in that case...”

“Date’s 2nd Special Duty Officer drew his spear to face something that simply fell.”

“What does that matter? Musashi’s Vice Chancellor drew her spear against us.”

“Don’t act like you don’t understand. ...This means whatever fell is equivalent to an academy’s high ranking officer.”

“I’m starting to wish we weren’t here right now.” Saizou lowered her hazy chin to Sasuke’s shoulder. “What do you think this is?”

“I’m sure you already have the same ridiculous prediction. It’s something that

went missing thirty years ago. It feels a little contrived for it to be in the Date clan, but there have been rumors and the connections are definitely there.”

“You mean Catholicism?”

“Testament.”

As soon as Sasuke said that, the sky ahead of them grew once more.

Saizou could only comprehend the color and the speed.

The color was blue and the speed flew left to right above the mown-down forest.

“...!?”

Her eyes could not keep up, but she next heard the sound of clashing metal.

By the time her gaze made it to the right, she saw a blue form colliding with the demonic warrior God of War.

...A dragon!? No, a God of War!?

The wind arrived a moment later. The rapid movement of the massive object had created a pressurized wall of air. The tree Sasuke clung to shook and the wind carried something their way.

It was a roar.

The God of War cried out like a dragon. And it did not express any clear emotion. It was not anger, sorrow, or frustration.

...Such negativity!

It was simply a trembling voice.

That negative voice bent into the whipping wind and a pressurized blast of air appeared in midair.

The roaring dragon kicked Oniniwa’s Sagetsu away and flew toward the moon. The wind it blasted downwards swelled up in the forest and Saizou felt like her own body was vanishing. However, Sasuke used the tree trunk to shield against the wind and protect her.

“Did it get away!?” he shouted.

“No!”

Saizou knew that the moonlight gave power to nonhumans.

The closer of the two moons was said to be a giant piece of Orei Metallo. Orei Metallo was concentrated ether, so the moonlight was given the power of ether. Nonhumans were closer to ether in their very existences, so the moonlight had a way of exciting them, but...

“Gods of War use ether fuel to run their various systems.”

So...

“Is Sagetsu going after it!?”

Sagetsu flew. The moonlight poured down on the four wings of its back as chased the dragon up above.

Meanwhile, the dragon-like God of War spread its arms.

“—————!”

And it flew.

A moment later, there was an impact, flying sparks, and roaring wind.

The dragon-like god of war swung its entire body around and used the claws at the end of its arms as weapons.

Its attacks never let up as it persistently pursued and charged at its enemy without falling back. Each claw powerfully yet accurately captured its opponent and the entire machine pushed forward.

Sagetsu reacted by using the tip and bottom of its spear to fight a defensive battle. It repeatedly deflected the claws coming in from the left and right.

“Ohhhhhh!!”

Sparks flew.

They both seemed to slide through the sky as they exchanged blows.

The dragon God of War pushed, but Sagetsu determined their direction with

its spear defense and back dashes.

Their movements were as intertwined as a dance, but...

“...!”

The blue dragon suddenly roared and spread its wings. Sagetsu could tell it was going to use its main flight wings in this close-range battle.

“Are you going to make an instantaneous acceleration!?”

And...

“Do you understand what is providing you with that power!?”

The dragon-like God of War answered with its power. It threw all of its speed forward.

Sasuke heard an intense sound in the sky.

The dragon’s acceleration had blasted it toward Sagetsu.

“Look at Sagetsu!” shouted Saizou behind him.

He knew why she was shaking his shoulders.

Sagetsu’s pilot, Oniniwa, was Date’s 2nd Special Duty Officer. If he was being pushed back, this opponent had to be quite powerful. The large God of War named Sagetsu had already been fighting a defensive battle, but...

“But you know what? Look more closely. Humans have these things called techniques.”

Sasuke looked up.

At some point, the flow of ether had formed a blowing wind of light in the night sky.

“For the time being, he’s turned this around on the dragon.”

The dragon-like God of War had been blasted into the sky.

Sagetsu had countered its charge and thrown it.

Oniniwa felt himself sweating even in his God of War body.

When the enemy had accelerated before his eyes, he could only describe it as an explosion.

Staff fighting techniques included many ways of receiving an opponent's attacks, sweeping them aside, and restraining them. He had tried to use one of those to restrain this enemy's attack.

But he had failed.

A good chunk of the heavy armor on his God of War's right shoulder had been torn away and his spear had broken.

As for the enemy...

“———!”

It was coming.

It collided with him before he could turn around.

He felt the shock, his chest armor bent, and a few layers of the armor burst off, but Oniniwa saw it.

He saw the enemy's face beyond the blue ether light in front of him. It was surrounded in blue armor, but...

“The Seiryu!”

Once he shouted that name, the Seiryu raised its right arm. It was going to make an extreme close range strike to finish him off, so...

“Fire!”

With that command, he made a certain decision.

He purged all of his armor with spell gunpowder.

Immediately afterwards, an explosion occurred between him and the Seiryu.

“...!?”

The Seiryu shook in confusion. Pushed by the purged armor, it moved away from him, creating a gap between them.

“...!”

He looked back to see four Gods of War with muskets at the ready.

The fireworks of gunfire were already flying and the bullets passed by his side.

“Take this!”

Sasuke saw it happen.

The flying bullets were spell bullets made to pierce ether defenses.

The four attacks of light raced toward the dragon and seemed certain to hit.

“The monster’s going to attack!”

As Saizou said that, she clung to his back. At the same time, he leaped backwards as if trying to kick the tree trunk away.

Before he could take a breath, it came. The dragon’s roar descended from the heavens in which the two moons floated.

Blue lightning struck the forested mountain range south of Yonezawa. And instead of a single bolt, eight struck at once. Then they raced along the mountain range as if to tear it all apart.

With tornadic movements, the pillars of blue light drew arcs as they blew away the trees and smashed the rocks. Sounds of felled trees and other destruction continued without end, the four flying bullets were devoured, and everything else was covered up as well.

“...!!”

The negative roar rang out, guiding the destruction.

The blue light resembled darker moonlight, but something still moved amid its swelling destruction: four Gods of War led by a demonic warrior God of War.

Sagetsu exchanged a few blows amid the racing blue light and swung its arms.

But it was not attacking the enemy.

“Fall back!”

Realizing what that meant, the other Gods of War took defensive stances just

in time for Sagetsu to strike them.

The large God of War still had plenty of strength left after losing its armor, so it provided solid strikes to the other four Gods of War and knocked them away. Sagetsu had moved them from the storm of violent light to protect them.

The armor of their defensively raised arms had broken, but...

“Commander!”

One tossed its spear to Sagetsu while all four began to fly away.

Meanwhile, a bolt of blue lightning raced out. This new bolt was meant for Sagetsu.

“Ohhhh!”

As the pillar of light approached, Sagetsu pulled in the spear tossed its way and slammed the tip into the blue light.

It was a forceful and flexible gouge, but it lacked the power to stop the dragon’s lightning. The tip was torn apart starting from the front and the metal shaft immediately split apart.

The spear was destroyed.

But the attack had not been useless. The pillar of light was disturbed for about half a breath, so Sagetsu took its next action.

In the stormy wind, it moved its wings once and hopped on top of the broken spear’s shaft. It stood gently on its toes and swung its main wings upwards in a compact motion.

“Prepare yourself!”

Sagetsu flew vertically in the gap left by the slowed pillar of blue light. It flew toward the form standing in the air with the two moons overhead. It flew toward that which resembled both a God of War and a dragon.

“———!”

And Sagetsu drew a sword from each hip as it did so.

A moment later, the light and wind had vanished.

The violent dance of falling light was torn apart, the forest had been pushed apart by the pressure of the air, and two forms looked into the sky behind the fallen trees.

They were Sasuke and Saizou. Sasuke had turned to the side to hide behind a tree and Saizou frowned while pressing against his back.

“What was that?” she asked to the sky.

In the celestial canopy above the deep darkness of the night, three crescent moons had been added to the two moons already there.

One was formed by the horns on the shoulders of the demonic warrior God of War that flew boldly with its back to the moon. The other two were formed by the silver arcs of the swords in its hands.

But something that had been in the sky was now gone.

“Where did that monster of a God of War go?”

That dragon-like form was nowhere to be seen now. Sasuke and Saizou only saw the demonic warrior’s shoulders rising and falling as it breathed and the four Gods of War lower down looking confused while checking in every direction.

“Did they drive it off?” asked Sasuke.

“No, I doubt that God of War ran off anywhere. What about you?”

“I agree. It was more like it disappeared...or was closed away. I don’t really get it, though.”

His voice sounded rough and he did not turn back toward her, but he was looking up into the sky from the shadows. He then asked himself a question.

“Why was that thing here? If the rumors are accurate...”

Saizou also stared into the night sky as she listened to him speak.

“It’s supposed to *belong* to the Date clan.”

Chapter 3: Peeper in a Holey Place

第三章

『穴あき場所の覗き屋』



この人どうして
逮捕されないんですか
配点（面倒だしー）

Why hasn't

This person been arrested?

Point Allocation (Too much work)

An idiot suddenly spoke up in a large space filled with light.

“Hey, Uqui and Noriki. ...Oh, Adele's here too. Virtual night begins at eight and it seems Futayo'll be fine after some Gold Mar healing, so how 'bout we go peeping?”

The workers stopped when they heard him.

They were on top of the residential district on Musashino's surface.

Surrounded by the torii-style goliath crane extending from one ship to the other, the Gods of War, and the echoing sounds, Adele was the first to raise her hand.

She put her wrench away in the work vest she wore over her track suit.

“Yeah, Futayo-san is pretty solid. ...Now, Chancellor, what's this about peeping and why are you asking me too?”

“What? It'll give you something to reference, won't it?”

“Y-you're going for the body-type jokes already!? Can't you show even a little mercy!?”

Adele saw the idiot hold his hands out to calm her down.

“Now, now. The work on the block around the Asama Shrine is finished, so I was thinking it was about time.”

Are you sure about that? thought Adele with a tilt of the head.

...And isn't Asama-san's place hidden?

The Musashi's remodeling had continued for about three weeks inside the Ariake's giant dock, but...

“Um, hasn't the Asama Shrine's spring been covered by an upper stealth field

while it's in use?"

"Oh, yeah, but we don't have to worry about that. I asked Asama's old man to add a small gap in the stealth. He laughed about how great youth is, so it should be fine."

Noriki glared at the idiot and made a shooing motion.

"Just get to work."

He gestured to everyone around him with his chin.

The surrounding people did indeed start working and Urquiaga leaned on a large wrench like a staff.

"Honestly, this is no time for peeping. We finally got the Musashi's external armor reattached and now we're loading in the internal blocks. Our speed is directly related to the number of people working."

"What? Don't be stupid. This is a way to maintain morale as we work!"

"Oh? Then let me ask one thing: are there any elder sister characters in that bath? If you're planning to maintain everyone's morale, you had better be catering to everyone's personal genres."

Are you sure about that? thought Adele as she brought a hand to her forehead.

"I guess Kimi-san, Mary-san, and the 6th Special Duty Officer would count."

"All of them have giant breasts. ...I am not a fan of large breasts. Oh, but they have to have something. As a Catholic, I prefer everything in moderation. But they have to have something. Remember that, Adele."

"Excuse meeeee! Someooooone! Someone arrest this half-dragooooon! Please arrest hiiiiimmm!"

Noriki turned his back and started to leave, but she was not sure whether to ignore it or not. Or should she shift focus to him to protect herself? At any rate...

"But why peeping, Chancellor?"

"Well, I'm crossdressing now, right?"

That was true. The idiot was wearing a work vest over an England girl's

summer uniform. But that did not answer her question.

“But why peeping?”

“What? ...Because a girl gets to go in the girl’s bath, right? Don’t you get it?”

“But aren’t you a boy?”

“What? I’ve always had a feminine heart. So I’m innocent.”

“Um, then did you have a feminine heart when you confessed to Vicereine Horizon?”

“What are you talking about, Adele? I’m a guy. Did you hit your head or something?”

“Poliiiiice! There’s a weird person over herrrrre!!”

A few guards from the closest police box ran over asking what had happened, but the instant they spotted the crossdresser, they made a U-turn and ran off as quickly as they had come. They whispered amongst themselves as they did.

“Hey, did you see that?”

“No, I didn’t. I didn’t see a damn thing. What about you?”

“Not a thing here either. I feel sorry for Miss Flat Vassal, though.”

So you did see it, she thought as Urquiaga spoke to the crossdresser.

“Listen, you fool. Only call me once you confirm the presence of an elder sister character.”

“Do you think you can get away with anything if you make it sound dignified?”

“Can you people just get to work?” added Noriki.

The boy was carrying a reinforced wooden screw measuring two meters long and he looked to the worksite, moving Gods of War, and transport ships flying around the dock.

“The view for the past three weeks has been wonderfully diligent. We’re finally approaching the end of the work, so we’re focused on loading on the city blocks.”

That’s true, thought Adele.

This scene before us is what we need to be doing right now, realized Adele.

Three weeks before, they had lost the Battle of Mikatagahara yet been saved by the long-lived forces of Oushuu.

Ever since the Kamakura period, the Oushuu Fujiwara lineage had kept the Shirakawa Mountains as their headquarters and managed Oushuu's distribution and affairs as mountain people. But according to Masazumi...

"They only barely exist in the Testament Union's history recreation."

They had no ability to interfere with history. On Yoshitsune's instructions, they had temporarily sheltered the Ariake and the people of Edo and Satomi, but...

...Some of the Oushuu forces don't want Musashi entering Oushuu, so the Musashi and the refugees moved to Mitotsudaira-san's land.

Adele suddenly looked down.

About three stories below, Mitotsudaira was reconstructing a park along with Naomasa on Jizuri Suzaku. The half-werewolf wore a track suit and singlehandedly held a garden stone the same size as the God of War held, but then she noticed Adele.

"Do you need something, Adele?"

"No, no. Nothing. Are you planning out the park?"

"Judge. We were thinking of giving it a more Western style, so we're giving the details a good bit of thought."

The girl then smiled bitterly.

"I'd like to maintain my land down below too. Far too often, I end up visiting and immediately coming back."

"I see. Mito down there is your land, isn't it?"

Mito was the Mito Matsudaira land in northeastern Kantou.

If Shirakawa was seen as the deep entrance to Oushuu, then the open land of Mito to the south was the shallow entrance. It acted as cushioning between Edo and Oushuu, but it bordered the ocean and left nowhere to hide.

There had been arguments for and against evacuating there, but Mitotsudaira had made the final decision: “Hashiba will do anything it takes to achieve their goal, but there is one rule they will follow: they always act based on the history recreation determined by the Testament Union. The Testament Union said this land is connected to the history recreation of Mito Mitsukuni, which is from the post-Hashiba age, so they cannot attack here. Doing so could be seen as an admission that their time has passed.”

With some help from the Provisional Council, they had used that as a way of holding back and confirming the actions of Hashiba via the Testament Union. So currently...

“Each ship’s residential district was loaded onto transport ships and sent down below...”

Silver Wolf: “If it’s a political issue, I can handle it. And Adele? If you’re worried about things down below, don’t be. The early confusion has died down.”

“I see,” said Adele before a message from Heidi popped up.

Marube-ya: “But there is some unrest, so you need to be careful, okay? Any non-fighter VIPs should keep bodyguards with them. ...You can hire some through us!”

When she thought about it, Adele realized that was why she and the others had the same shift as the Chancellor.

She sighed and looked back to the crossdresser.

“If only the Chancellor wasn’t our power outlet, we wouldn’t need to keep him around to supply ether everywhere.”

“You can be pretty cruel sometimes, you know that?”

Can I? she wondered, but being on his shift meant she had to move all over the ships. He would almost get away from her sometimes because he knew some weird shortcuts, but that was when the dogs came in handy.

...I have been learning where some of the mystery dogs live, so that’s a plus.

“But about this peeping business, Chancellor. I don’t think you have to worry about everyone that much.”

“Now, now.” The crossdresser put his hands on his hips and began a mysterious swinging of those hips. “It’s worth risking your life over until Satomi’s Flat Girl shows up.”

“Adele,” said Urquiaga. “Personally, I think the public morals would improve if you invited Yoshiyasu along.”

“I’d just be setting her up for a trap! And I’d be a victim too!”

“Oh, but the wives are off limits since they’ve got husbands. And we’ve got that meeting with Date before long, right? So let’s hurry to the bath and-... Oh, hey, Seijun.”

“What?”

With the surrounding wide blocks missing, Musashino’s surface area was essentially a midair passageway and someone turned back toward them on that passageway.

The uniformed figure was visible across the approximately eighteen meter distance of a wide block.

“Heyyy, Seijun, where are you going?”

Masazumi turned around when her nickname was called.

Atop the floating bridge of the residential district under construction, she saw Adele, Urquiaga, Noriki, and...

“...? What does an English girl want with me?”

“N-no, Vice President! That’s the crossdresser! He’s crossdressing!”

Not again, she thought.

Dealing with him never ended well, so she decided to get through this with only the boilerplate responses.

So she smiled, raised her right hand, and pointed her thumb downwards.

“Bye. I’m busy right now.”

“Oh, sure. ...N-no, wait! Is that any way to treat a human being!?”

She certainly had not expected to receive a lecture from the crossdresser, but...

...He certainly doesn't change.

She started feeling silly for all the thoughts she had down below earlier in the day, but she also knew he had to have some thoughts of his own. It was commonly said that the human heart was difficult to understand and she agreed.

Did the idiot over there still contain the idiot who had realized she was different at Mikatagahara?

Part of her hoped so, but another part felt things would be harder if that side of him rose to the surface.

So she accepted that the current way of doing things was easier for her.

"Sorry, sorry."

She smiled and pointed both thumbs downwards.

"I shouldn't have left it half-done. ...Bye."

"Oh, sure. ...No, wait, wait, wait, wait! While I'll take my hat off to how thorough you are, at least answer my question. Where are you going? Are you getting some food? Let's go get some food courtesy of Nate!"

In the park three stories below, Mitotsudaira stopped telling Jizuri Suzaku where to place a stone and shouted up at the crossdresser.

"Don't you think you already got carried away enough when we visited my city last night!?"

Masazumi noticed Naomasa averting her gaze on Jizuri Suzaku's shoulder.

...Naomasa ate a lot last night too, didn't she?

Unlike in Europe, Mito had plenty of vegetables and grains, which meant Far Eastern food. Masazumi had appreciated the great variety of food the night before, but...

"Hey."

Before she could turn toward the voice behind her, the crossdresser called out.

“Oh, Flat Girl. Where are you headed?”

Satomi Yoshiyasu turned around when her unfortunate nickname was called.

Atop the floating bridge of the residential district under construction, she saw the vassal, the half-dragon 2nd Special Duty Officer, a boy she was fairly certain was a relatively normal classmate of theirs, and...

“...? Why are you naked?”

“Eh!? Ah, the Satomi President is right! When did the Chancellor switch from crossdressing to nudism!?”

Is that some kind of magic trick? wondered Yoshiyasu.

But she knew getting involved here would end badly, so...

“Hey, Musashi Vice President. ...You take care of this.”

Musashi’s Vice President slowly turned her way with a wide-eyed look. Yoshiyasu knew she had shoved an awful task onto the girl, but she was still unaccustomed to these things.

After all, she was a refugee now that Satomi had been conquered by Hashiba. She had a number of thoughts about that, but she had been thankful for the busy days Musashi’s remodeling had given her.

...Even that stupid chancellor is probably trying to help.

Meanwhile, everyone’s attempts at helping were on such a high difficulty setting that she often had no idea how to react. The other day, she had visited the Asama Shrine to change her Shinto divine protection contract and the giant shrine maiden had said the following: “Um, you’re a God of War pilot, Yoshi-chan, so you’ll definitely need life support divine protection like body temperature regulation. I’ll give you a virtual full stomach so you don’t get hungry as much, but will a sake version work? Or maybe a sweet sake version? Oh, but it can’t be curry. Hassan does that because he likes it, not for anything Shinto related. ...Isn’t sake amazing? Ours is really delicious.”

She had ultimately gotten a rice cake version, but the shrine maiden had been persistent.

The Chancellor's sister had said, "Heh heh heh. You've got the makings of a great toy, so I hope you're ready, Yoshiy!" , but she had no idea what that meant. The black-winged 4th Special Duty Officer had taken some notes afterwards, but that too was a mystery.

...They're such a strange group. But they are my upperclassmen.

She decided to show her respect, but Musashi's Vice President glared the idiot's way and scratched at her head. She opened her mouth to explain where they were going.

"Um...uh..."

It isn't often this girl seems so reluctant to say something, thought Yoshiyasu as the girl gestured to the left with her chin. That was to the north.

"Tsukinowa."

"Maa."

Her words began to appear on the opened sign frame.

Vice President: "The negotiator for Date will arrive for their unofficial visit in three hours."

"Ehhh!? You're negotiating to go on an unofficial date in three minutes!?"

...What in the world are you talking about? And that clearly said three "hours" not "minutes".

Yoshiyasu could not believe how calmly Musashi's Vice President responded to the idiot. Sometimes she began to wonder if bothering her was one of their permanent skills.

Anyway, she thought while facing the sign frame as the other girl typed at it.

Vice President: "I'm on my way to Asama's place for a bath. Then I'll get some food somewhere private so we can work out a plan for the meeting at the same time."

Flat Vassal: "Eh!? At Asama-san's place!? With Satomi's President!?"



……いつも通り、なのかな。



Why did she latch onto that part? wondered Yoshiyasu with a tilt of her head.

Righteousness: “That’s our plan. What about it?”

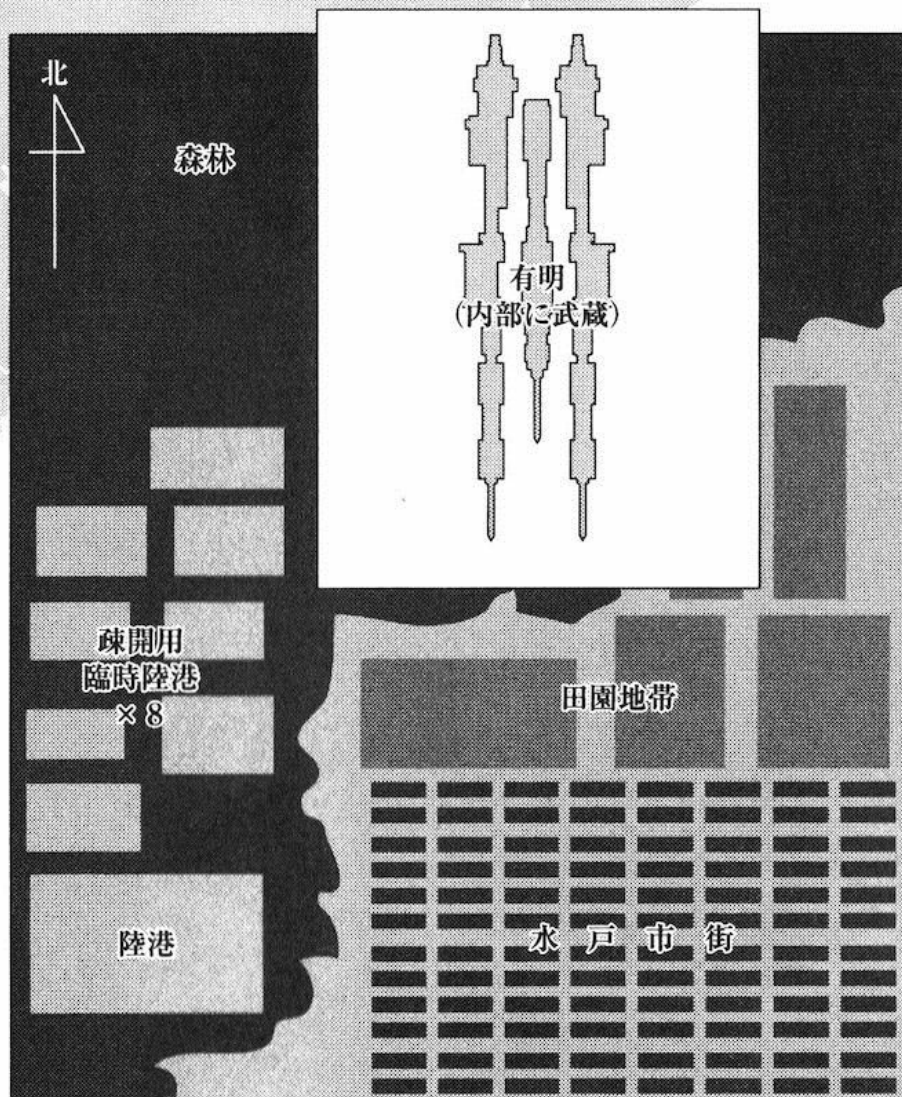
Across the way, the vassal smiled and waved hand back and forth.

Flat Vassal: “Oh, nothing. But this should help preserve the public morals.”

...Does this mean everything’s normal?

Study:

●有明周辺図●



「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! 有明の周りって、どんな感じなのか教えてくんね!? やっぱ納豆埋め畑とビーナツ畑と肉牛牧場ばっかなのか!?!」

「ククク豆弟、どうでもいいけど豆腐が“畑の肉”なら、牛は“牧場の豆”よねえ」

「いや、あの、姉ちゃん、今回行数ケツコ狭いんでそこらへんどうにかなんね?」

「仕方ないわねえ。……って大体上で見てる通りね。概容図なので大きさテキトーだけど、上空の有明はステルスで実際は見えないから気をつけるのよ」

あと、武蔵と有明のせいで、陸港や各地への貿易輸送艦や、資材輸送艦がひっきりなしに行き来してるわね。地上側では、確実に“改修景気”になってるわ」

「南側は街が続いていて、しばらくすると田園、西側は森林が……」

「北はしばらく行くと、奥州平泉の長寿族が住む隠れ里があるわね。勿論、隠れ里だから見えるわけないんだけど。でも地上側の集落は歴史ある建造物が未だ残ってるわ」

「東の海に行きてえけど、時期としてはもうちょっと後がベストってところかな! 一ヶ月後が旬か?」

「あんたアウトドア計画ばっか練ってないで町とか古跡にも行きなさいよ?」

Map of the Area around the Ariake

Map:

Far Top Left: North

Top Left: Forest

Top Right: Ariake (With the Musashi inside)

Middle Left: Separated Temporary Land Ports x8

Middle Right: Fields

Bottom Left: Land Port

Bottom Right: Mito City

Toori: Sis! Sis! Can you tell me what it's like around the Ariake!? Is it full of natto fields, peanut fields, and cattle ranches!?

Kimi: Heh heh heh. Bean brother, it doesn't really matter, but if tofu is known as the meat of the field, then cows are the beans of the ranches.

Toori: No, um, sis, we don't have much room this time, so can you keep it short?

Kimi: If you insist. ...So it's pretty much like you see above. Just remember that the scale is arbitrary and the Ariake is using stealth so you can't actually see it. Also, the Musashi and the Ariake's presence mean that transport ships full of trade goods and full of materials are flying to and from the land ports and various other areas. The repairs are keeping people busy on the surface too.

Toori: So the city continues on down to the south and eventually becomes more fields. And there's just the forest to the west, hm?

Kimi: Continue north for a while and you reach the hidden city of the Oushuu Fujiwara long-lived. Of course, you can't actually see it since it's hidden, but some historical buildings still exist in the village on the surface.

Toori: I want to visit the ocean to the east, but it's probably too soon for that! Would a month from now be best!?

Kimi: You need to stop making these outdoor plans. How about you visit the city or the ruins?

Chapter 4: Gatherers in the Dark

第四章

『暗中奥の揃い人』



優しい場所とは
もの足りぬ場所か
安堵の場所か
配点 (高望み)

Is a kind place

An insufficient place

Or a place of rest?

Point Allocation (Hoping for too much)

At 8:30 PM, the inside of the Ariake was dimly lit.

Even at night, the lights on the massive dock's ceiling were on and work was ongoing, but...

"They make sure to turn down all but the overhead lights at night, but then they switch over to a complete lights out, except for the lights at the work sites, to allow for a few hours of night work training and for nighttime inspections."

Someone spoke within the vertical blowing wind.

The lights on the ceiling illuminated a single figure standing on the corridor built at the edge of Okutama's stern cargo port. But the shadow they cast on the floor was of uncertain density.

"There's three of us...four including me."

"Us" being...

"That's nearly half the Sanada Ten Braves. Talk about a bargain."

Four shadows stood in the gentle breeze of the Ariake's night.

One of them sighed and gave a somewhat self-deprecating comment.

"I guess you could call us Sanada 4/10 Braves. That just sounds numerically ominous to me."

The small shadow standing next to him asked a question in a female voice.

"Anayama, should you really be showing yourself?"

"It's fine for me, Isa-kun. But you three need to be careful. You may be disguised, but you can easily gather attention from a careless mistake when you aren't accustomed to things here. Stay in your hidden form when you're out and

try to do so when you're asleep too. Yuri-kun and Nezu-kun, you two arrived ahead of us, but could you double check yourselves now since we're finally getting started? And...Isa-kun."

"Oh, right, right. I need to look into the Musashi's remodeling and then sabotage whatever I can, right? So basically I've gotta use everything I learned as an engineering student and then add in some sabotage if possible. Our teachers told me to play it by ear."

"I'll leave that to you after checking on the state of Musashi's outer hull and interior. Last time I stayed here, the automatons in charge of each block performed constant scans with their artificial brains."

"Yup. And that's why I made sure to bring some powder explosion spells that can be disguised as reinforcing materials. I'll only think about doing what's reasonably possible. Also...Yuri and Nezu?"

"Testament. What is it?"

A girl's voice responded and a boy's followed.

"What is it? Do you need something with me too?"

"Yeah," replied Isa's voice. "Your infiltration went well. I'm glad we sent you on ahead at IZUMO as normal people wanting to assist Musashi. I never thought there'd be three quarantines and then a password."

"Yes. For the first half of today's password, you ask 'you're not just happy you're...' And for the second half, I believe you answer 'I'll never forgive that son of a bitch!' I'm not quite sure how the two are related, so you just have to memorize it. Although I have a feeling that the second half is the same every time."

"Yeah, a few days ago it was 'wave that spear around and you get...' and 'I'll never forgive that son of a bitch!' I almost blew my cover by answering with the name."

"That's because you take everything so seriously, Nezu," said the flat voice of the girl named Yuri. "What are our next instructions, Anayama?"

Nezu replied to that.

“Our superior is Kakei, so I’d rather avoid getting instructions here.”

“You really do take everything too seriously,” said Isa with a bitter smile in her voice.

“I don’t like having to deal with multiple instructions at once because I don’t like making mistakes. So...”

“Yeah,” agreed Anayama. “Kakei-kun is the type to live a life of no mistakes.”

“Testament. After all, it was my mistake that led to us being ‘unneeded’.”

“You don’t have to say that or even think it, Nezu-kun. We’ve found ourselves more than ‘needed’ at Sanada Academy.”

But...

“It’s not you but us that need to never forget that. Partially because we were found unnecessary for the stage and era we were meant for, but also...”

A smile filled Anayama’s voice.

“We can’t allow any actions based in sympathy like the one that picked us up. As long as losers remain losers and winners remain winners, it is only polite to forever maintain that relationship. I suppose a doll wouldn’t be able to-...”

“Anayama,” said the Yuri’s voice. “You’re losing focus.”

“My apologies.” Anayama took a breath and gave his instructions to the others. “Let’s find a way to show off our skills. I have an idea how to do that and Yuri-kun and Nezu-kun can guide us.”

As soon as he said that, the dock filled with even deeper darkness.

Isa spoke up as the vast space sank into darkness and lights came to life here and there.

“Ohh, check out this atmosphere! This is the kind of nighttime atmosphere everyone loves!!”

“Please don’t get so excited when you see the improvements to our eventual enemy’s ship, Isa. And this isn’t a nighttime atmosphere; it’s the lights out to test the nighttime movement of each component now that the remodeling is about 80% complete. They have lights at the work sites so they don’t have to

stop working, but they're testing the nighttime stealth, checking the ether light visible on the surface of the armor, and looking for any distortions at low temperature. Thanks to that, they're actually on even higher alert than normal."

"Oh, sorry, Yuri. My mind started wandering somewhere around 'please'."

"It's a mystery how you can do God of War engineering with a mind like that," said Yuri with a bitter smile in her voice. "Anyway. From now on, can we make an attack if we see an opening?"

"Yes, Yuri-kun. If you produce any results, make sure to leave a statement at the scene," said Anayama with a smile. "But make sure you get your job done before leaving. Please don't flee the Musashi before doing that, okay?"

"In other words, we need to stay hidden and continue with the mission even if they realize we're here?"

"Testament. That will tell them perfectly well what we're capable of."

Anayama looked up from his position on the very back of Okutama.

From that rear cargo port, he could see the stacks of repair materials and a giant wall beyond them.

That wall contained the rooms for corporations and committees, but beyond it...

"Musashi Ariadust Academy," muttered Anayama. "That's where our work for a new era begins."

A few figures stood in front of the back wall that divided the cargo port from the ship proper. The one protected by bodyguards in the center wore a Student Council armband. He was performing a periodic check of different sites.

Yuri spoke his name.

"That's Musashi Ariadust Academy Student Council Secretary Neshinbara Toussaint, isn't it?"

She continued from there.

"Interesting. If you ask me, the work, era, and role that lie ahead shouldn't be too bad."

With that said, one of the shadows slowly moved forward.

It vanished into the Ariake's night.

"Oh, it's gotten dark now. Sorry about all the new jobs I'm giving you this late. I know how much work this must be."

A boy in glasses spoke within the dim light. He adjusted the position of the armband saying "Secretary: Neshinbara Toussaint" to better show off the writing.

"But these new jobs just keep cropping up, don't they?"

Neshinbara was glaring at some piles of books and paper in one corner of the port. Some were magazines, some were hardback books, some were paperback books, some were doujinshi, some were newspapers, and some were just piles of documents.

One of the people standing behind him looked in the same direction and started to move. That girl in glasses wore an armband saying "Representative Committee Chairman: Ookubo".

The two swords hanging from her left hip shook as she checked the piles of books and frowned.

"I'm glad I ain't on the Public Morals Committee. ...That's a lot of obscene material."

"With your qualifications, you could easily hold a position on the Public Morals Committee too. ...But what do you think?"

"About what exactly?"

"Judge." Neshinbara turned his smiling gaze toward Ookubo. "If possible, I'd like you to be on the Student Council next year. Not many people in Musashi have a double inherited name and you have the names of two Matsudaira leaders: Ookubo Tadachika and Ookubo Nagayasu."

Ookubo smiled bitterly at that and touched the two swords at her hip.

"Both of them end up pretty lonely in their final years or after their death."

“No, no. You can get around that with interpretations and write your own page in history! I know you can do it!”

“Secretary, is this your usual illness?”

“I-it is not an illness! Th-the history recreation is necessary?”

Ookubo nodded as the others in the area whispered “why was that a question?” and then she shrugged.

“I may have inherited the names, but given the fate of those names, it means a lot of future loss. Someone like me only got them because not many other people wanted them.”

“Still, getting two names doesn’t happen every day.”

Ookubo laughed quietly and then sighed.

“In that case, maybe I should eventually go for a name with a better future as a triple inherited name.”

“Milady.”

A flat voice spoke up from behind Ookubo. An automaton in a Far Eastern girl’s summer uniform stood there. As a Middle Eastern automaton, her skin was a little dark.

She bowed when Ookubo looked back.

“I have determined you are bragging too much.”

“Oh, sorry about that, Kanou-kun.”

Ookubo smiled toward Kanou and then Neshinbara spoke up with emotion in his voice.

“Ookubo-kun and Kanou-kun, the Representative Committee chairman and Public Morals Committee chairman. ...You two make a good pair.”



大久保・忠隣／長安

加納

...They really do make a good pair.

There was a reason Neshinbara thought that.

...You've got the cool Representative Committee chairman and the even cooler Public Morals Committee chairman. Plus, one's the daughter of an influential family and the other's her maid automaton. Ahh, could this be any more perfect for a doujinshi!?

After deciding to let Naruze use the girls themselves while he modeled characters after them, Neshinbara began imagining characters resembling them having a swordfight with the full moons in the background.

Four Eyes: “Just calling to check in on you, but are you imagining anything weird right now? Tell me all about it.”

Novice: “You’re just assuming I am!? Besides, the things I imagine are perfectly healthy. After all, they’re chock full of dreams!”

Four Eyes: “Then do you want to hear what I dream about?”

“Eh?” said Neshinbara in reality.

Ookubo and Kanou tilted their heads in front of him, but a cold sweat started pouring down his face while he slowly typed the same question into his sign frame and sent it to the other girl.

Novice: “Eh?”

Four Eyes: “Testament.”

She proceeded to ask again.

Four Eyes: “Do you want to hear what I dream about?”

Mal-Ga: “That’s checkmate for her.”

Marube-ya: “Judge. If he can’t keep up with a leap in logic like that, it really is checkmate.”

Asama: “Um, yes. This might be an important moment, so I’ll make sure it gets recorded. I never thought Neshinbara-kun would end up becoming English.”

...Don't make this more serious than it already is!!

Beyond the cold intensity of the sign frame, Kanou lightly shook her hair.

“Secretary, Shall I handle all this paper media?”

“Eh? Oh, sure.”

After typing that he was trying to work, Neshinbara faced forward again.

The piles of paper media that Kanou had indicated truly had grown into a mountain.

“I never thought there would be so much after adding in what was hidden under beds and tatami mats.”

Neshinbara checked the books and newspapers piled up to his shoulders.

...This just shows how much everyone was living their lives.

During the remodeling, they had looked back over almost the entirety of each ship and cleaned it all up to lighten everything.

The most work during that lightening cleaning came from the weight of paper items and everyday items like clothing.

A single book weighed three hundred grams and the Musashi’s population was nearly one hundred thousand, so if each person had a single book, that was nearly thirty tons.

Books needed for school or work had been spared, as had ones with sentimental value, but...

“The unnecessary ones will be recycled as materials for internal bulkheads and building materials. And the storage area at the top of the Ariake is also used to host events, so we could even open a used book market.”

But there was so much of it. It was too much to carry it all out at once, so this was their eighth time.

...“Musashi”-kun and the others are getting strict with their weight sensors, so we keep finding so many books.

The Far East had historically had an active woodblock printing culture. They had also had paper-making technology, so plenty of printed materials filled the

cities as entertainment items.

The students who transferred in from the West or Middle East were always surprised by how many books the Far East had and how casually the books were treated.

...Having books nearby was part of the reason I came to the Far East in the first place.

Shakespeare had instead gone to England for the plays.

As he realized a culture had a way of drawing people in, Neshinbara had his Mouse Michizane inspect the scale of the piles of paper. He also grabbed a few of them.

“Oh, the noble story of Mass Kagami. Isn’t this the one where a shared consciousness has reached universal scale and everyone tells everyone to ‘take a look in the mirror’? I never read the previous book, though.”

Resisting the urge to flip through it took some doing. Not all of the things there were old. Some had been bought at the city below even as the recovery work was underway, some were newly issued newspapers, and some were documents used for meetings about the remodeling or at the work sites themselves.

Deciding whether to use them as materials or to resell them was the Industrial Committee’s job, but the Public Morals Committee also had to inspect them. That was where Kanou came in.

“Please stand back, everyone. I will now inspect and sort them.”

She opened a few management program sign frames.

Once they were sorted, Representative Committee Chairman Ookubo would give her approval and the rest of the work would begin. Finally, the fate of the paper media would be determined.

It was a small job when compared to the enormous task of remodeling the Musashi, but that remodeling work was made up of these smaller jobs. The quicker they could finish these small jobs, the faster the pace of the whole.

...And that means the Student Council, the committee chairmen, and the committee vice chairmen need to keep active.

Neshinbara looked to Ookubo and Kanou as they picked up one of the items sorted by a sign frame.

“Why do guys like this kind of thing, Kanou-kun?”

“Judge. That is just part of being male.”

...Sorry, but that one was drawn by our 4th Special Duty Officer. Yeah. Look, it has a lot of material targeted toward girls, doesn't it?

Once the inspection was complete, he would move to where he needed to be next. And based on the divine chat log from earlier...

Me: “Hey, everyone, we'll be meeting up at the Blue Thunder. It's been a while, so let's use the one I live at. Be there at eight.”

Judge, judge, silently agreed Neshinbara.

...It really has been a while since we've met there.

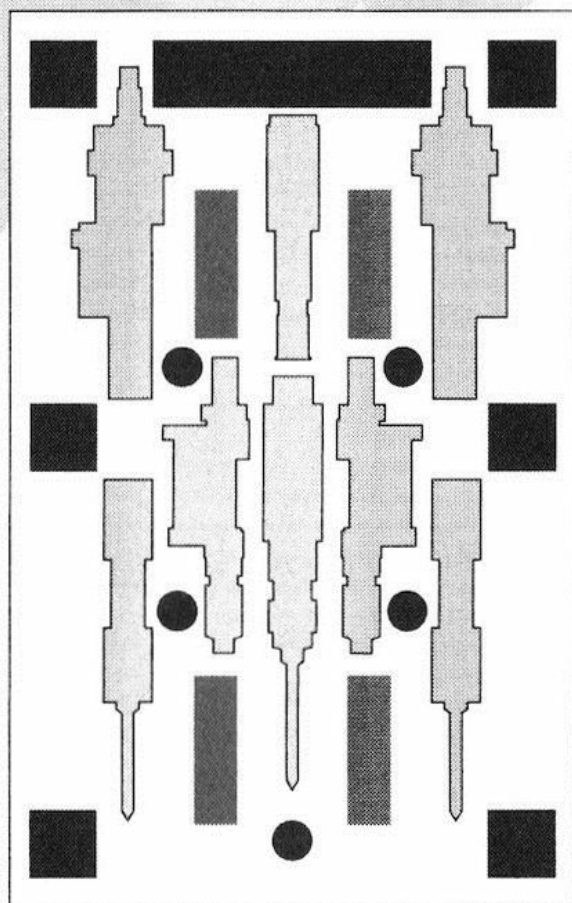
He then nodded to Ookubo, Kanou, and the others.

“I'll be heading to where I'm needed next, so you take care of the rest. There's a lot I want to ask you next time I see you, so keep that in mind.”

“Testament. Where are you going now, secretary?”

“Well.” He nodded. “For some food plus a meeting.”

●有明内部●



「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! 有明内部ってどーなってんだ!? 中にいるけど全体把握が難しいっつーか、実はケッコー単純?」



「フッフ単弟、ぶっちゃけ多重トラスフレームとか分散ブロック構造とか懸架支柱とか言いたくなりもするけど、ドデカイドームを考えて貰えばいいわねえ。」

基本は武蔵の甲板が有明の床の高さと同じになるように出来てるけど、中央艦は他艦の陰になって輸送とか面倒だから、やや高くして上を渡る橋や輸送艦からの輸送を主としてるわね。

上の図の、

□: 薄い灰色部分=武蔵各艦が入った格納槽

■: 灰色部分 = 改修要員用の臨時市街

■: 濃い灰色部分=資材のメイン置き場

という感じね」



「臨時市街って何だ? いきなり村にランクダウンしたりすんの?」



「土地のど真ん中に間違っって地脈炉置くようなゲームの話はやめるのよ? ——で、臨時市街というのは、初期の段階に武蔵の中身をほとんど抜いたから、その代わりに作った町なの。有明職員が通常整備用に用意していた町では規模が足りなくて増設したのね」



「また随分とハデにガチャガチャやってんだなあ……」



「内部の組み込みが進むに連れ、臨時市街は縮小。今は武蔵内部で改修要員は生活してるわ。私達の家なんかも、元の位置に戻されてるわね」



「っー事は俺の逃走路なんかもそろそろ復活かー! 行けるな!!」



「おいおいコラコラ何処行くねん」

Study

Inside the Ariake

Toori: Sis! Sis! What's it like inside the Ariake!? I'm inside, but it's hard to get an idea of the whole thing. Is it actually pretty simple?

Kimi: Heh heh heh. Simple brother, I'd like to bring up the multiple truss frames, split block structure, and support pillars, but you can just think of it like a giant dome.

It's basically made so Musashi's deck is at the same height as the Ariake's floor, but that would hide the central ships behind the others and make transportation difficult. That's why they're placed a little higher and transportation is mainly done by bridge and transport ship.

Here's a key for the above diagram:

Light gray = Storage areas for the Musashi's ships

Gray = Temporary cities for the remodeling personnel

Dark gray = Main storage areas for materials.

Toori: What's a temporary city? Does that mean it's about to be demoted to a village?

Kimi: Stop talking about that game where you can mistakenly stick a Ley Line reactor in the middle of the earth. ...The temporary cities are small cities made to replace the contents of the Musashi that were mostly removed at the earliest stages. The city used by the Ariake workers for standard maintenance wasn't large enough.

Toori: This sure is large-scale and a complete mess, isn't it?

Kimi: As the interior is built back up, the temporary cities shrink. The remodeling personnel are living inside the Musashi by this point. Even our house has been returned to its normal spot.

Toori: And that means my escape routes are back! I'm back in business!!

Kimi: Hey, hey. Where do you think you're going?

Chapter 5: Actors at the Warehouse

第五章

『現場倉庫の演技者達』

闇に閃く禁忌の力
生まれる波動の
呪われた根元
配点（右手）



*What is the cursed source
Of the wave of forbidden power
That flashes in the darkness?*

Point Allocation (Right Hand)

A fifteen square meter room was filled with light.

It was a dining room connected to the double-door entranceway. Half the floor was covered in carpet with a sofa and decorative plants on top. The man standing in the center of the room spoke calmly to the dozen or so people standing by the entrance.

“Now, welcome to my home, provisional councilors.”

Honda Masanobu said more after placing a cigar in his mouth.

“Masazumi will be out attending several meetings tonight. We have already finished the necessary arrangements for that, but it also means Masazumi will not be returning tonight.”

And you know what that means?

“Tomorrow, when Masazumi gets home in the morning, I get to scold her and be generally disagreeable. Heh heh heh...”

“Kh! Y-you have no idea how jealous I am!”

“Oh, I think I do.”

Masanobu twisted his body and used both hands and the cigar to point at the clenched teeth of the group by the entrance.

“Jealous?”

One of them rushed forward and bowed down at Masanobu’s feet. The man even grabbed Masanobu’s foot and kissed the shoe.

“M-Masanobu-sama! Th-this time, I will take up the perfect viewing position tonight!”

“Judge. According to the history recreation, the royals and nobles would

demonstrate their status with their seating position at the theatre and similar places. So, Suminokura, you have made the correct decision.”

Everyone gasped at Masanobu’s words and at the lifted corners of Suminokura’s mouth when he looked back.

But then a dull sound rang out. Within the group by the entrance, Konishi had silently placed his box-shaped bag on the floor.

The heavy sound brought a brief silence. After everyone’s focus raced to Masanobu and Konishi, it slowly arrived at the bag itself. A beat later, Masanobu gently blew some cigar smoke from the corner of his mouth, kicked Suminokura aside, and walked forward.

He ignored Suminokura’s coquettish shriek and faced Konishi.

“Koni-tan, you truly are the best!”

“Come now, Nobu-tan. All I did was edit together eight hours’ worth of Oushuu and Russia’s video programs for our sleepover meeting. Watch these eight hours and I guarantee you will be up to date on just what is popular in the Oushuu and Russia regions!”

“Oh? You mean we will be able to post away on the divine network while pretending we know what we’re talking about?”

“Judge. So, um, Nobu-tan?”

“I will not give up the sofa Masazumi slept in today. It is mine.”

“Kh.”

Konishi’s eyebrows twisted, but Masanobu nodded his way.

“Sit next to me, Koni-tan. What you have done is worth at least that much.”

He snapped his fingers and house-control sign frames appeared in each room. The front door automatically locked, the curtains closed, and the picture frames on the wall rotated to reveal the woodblock character art on the reverse side.

A hallway door automatically opened to reveal the kitchen.

“Masazumi made some Far Eastern hors d’oeuvres using the skills my wife taught her. I am willing to part with them for three hundred each. And with that

said, let us continue our work.”

Masanobu’s sharp eyes watched Konishi and the others enter the dining room and Suminokura sit up and adjust his position.

“There is unrest within the Musashi. No, it is outside the Musashi as well. ...We need to eliminate it.”

Neshinbara walked down a dimly-lit road.

“The meeting is on the starboard side, hm? It’s been a while...”

He was currently at the back end of Musashino. There was a materials yard inside the rear wall. The piles of materials rose several dozen meters high, creating labyrinthine passageways between them.

He was surrounded by the sounds of construction. Even in the darkness, the work continued. The constant sounds of hammering echoed endlessly from the holes in the floor. The notes of sawing, drilling, and welding joined in too. Occasionally, the scent of burnt metal reached his nose, giving it a sense of presence much like the smell of cooking did for food.

As he walked through the passageway filled with those sounds and smells, Neshinbara smiled bitterly.

“If this was a cheap novel or manga, this is the kind of place where I’d be attacked by an assassin. And after I saw who it was, I’d shout ‘Y-you!?’ and be defeated.”

He looked forward and saw several people collapsed on the long, deserted passageway between the materials.

“...What?”

The walls of materials made it hard to see a lot of the areas here. And with parts of the floor and walls removed, the automatons’ sensors were not in perfect working order. That was why the guards made periodic patrols, but...

“Hey, you all.”

The people collapsed in the passageways wore guard uniforms.

They were the four who performed the patrols and they all lay motionless in the shadows.

They had been attacked.

This is serious, thought Neshinbara.

He decided the first step was to report this, so he opened a sign frame and sent a voice divine transmission to the guard station, but...

“It can’t get through?”

Michizane shook his head and held out a sign frame that said “no authority”.

Not only were the guards collapsed around here, but the location had lost its divine transmission authority. That seemed off to Neshinbara, so he moved his right hand’s fingers to type into a spell keyboard.

...Strange.

The collapsed guards had all been attacked on the back or waist. They were bleeding, but the amount of blood on the floor suggested the attack had been quite recent. Which meant...

“They’re still nearby.”

“Indeed I am. Close enough to see me if you turned around, even.”

The voice behind him was growing even closer, but Neshinbara did not turn around.

He moved his right hand to open a sign frame for his created spell “Mountains of Words” and text raced from the spell keyboard.

<I evade.>

<I twist to the right, gather the power residing in my right hand, and release it backwards.> <An explosion whips up the wind.>

But the enemy used their own movements to keep the wind moving forward.

<Did they dodge it?>

<No, that is not what happened.>

<I intentionally missed. After all...>

<If I take a step forward, I can see their face from the side.> There they were. He could see someone wearing a hood. He could not see their face, but he guessed they were a girl based on the solid but quiet footsteps.

<I speak.>

"If you want my signature, show your face, hand me what you want me to sign, and ask nicely."

He received an attack instead.

Strange. Why would they want me to sign a knife?

Did I do anything to deserve this? I can't think of anything.

So...

<I form words and strike.>

<I move confidently.>

<I just barely dodge the enemy's attack to enjoy the thrill.> <And then I make repeated attacks with each attack turning into many.> But the enemy avoided those with smooth twisting movements and made another attack.

<That was some nice movement.>

<I attack, getting the enemy to evade.>

<I run, leap up the wall, fly through the air, and...>

After avoiding an explosive roar, the enemy pursued, but after he leaped high into the air...

<I turn around in midair.>

He saw the enemy in her hooded cloak. The enemy was swinging up her blade while making a leap of her own. There was no way to evade in midair, but...

<Don't underestimate writing.>

<I strike with the wind as a counterattack.>

As soon as the wind blasted forward, Neshinbara saw something.

“————!?”

The enemy had vanished. The hooded cloak remained, but...

...She dropped down!?

He could sense her presence down below. The movements of the wind told him as much. Before the wind had hit her in midair, she had flipped around to intentionally lose speed and drop down.

If she had intended to do so from the beginning, leaping after him had been a feint.

<Then I kick off the wall of materials.>

He jumped upwards, but not just to buy time.

<This is the starting point.>

<I cause the wall of materials to wobble.>

<To the enemy's misfortune, the materials were improperly piled up.>

<Countless heavy armor panels fall from above and strike the enemy below.>

That was exactly what happened.

As the words were realized, metal panels fell from seventy meters up and stabbed into the narrow passageway.

A great din sounded and all of the structures around the passageway were brought down or thrown into the air. A great creaking rang out and the area management program opened a warning display inside the Ariake.

The wind caused by the heavy fallen objects washed over Neshinbara as he thought to himself.

...That was a close one, but I made it.

I need to calmly leave without speaking a word or looking back, don't I? I can contact the guards once I can send divine transmissions again. This could only get better if it all exploded behind me. Oh, wait. I need to rescue the guards who were collapsed back there.

“...Huh?”

He heard an unexpected sound. It was not the sound of confused people running up after noticing the commotion. He heard a five meter long armor panel only now crashing to the floor.

It was not that its fall had been delayed. Mountains of Words was a spell that caused phenomena, so he would need to specify that the fall had been delayed for that to happen.

...So did something else make that one piece fall later!?

With a loud sound of rustling clothing and a sharp footstep, he turned around.

But there was no one there. He only saw the armor panels stabbed into the passageway and collapsed against the other piles of materials.

However, he did see something below the delayed armor panel.

It was a sword. The sword belonging to one of the injured guards was broken. And it was in the perfect position to support one of the fallen armor panels.

Someone had swiped it from the guard and used it to create a safe space from the falling objects.

In that case, realized Neshinbara as he immediately started moving.

<I take a large leap backwards.>

He did not know where the enemy was, so he tried to move as far away as possible.

A moment later, he caught sight of a blade circling in from behind him.

...A scythe!?

Someone was behind him. And they were trying to slit his throat while making a leap identical to his own.

He knew he had to avoid this, but...

“I’m in a hurry. Let this end it.”

He heard a female voice, but not from behind him.

It came from beyond the materials on the left. Someone stood on the other side of a pile of metal frames.

The figure raised their weapon.

When he saw the person and their raised weapon through the holes in the materials, he gave a shout.

“Y-you!?”

A single attack brought it all to an end.

“A new job?”

A female voice spoke in the dim light.

A blonde in an English girl’s summer uniform walked down a Musashino pathway with piles of materials on either side. She held a bucket with a change of clothes and other bath supplies below her chest and her hair swayed as she looked to the person walking to her left.

Her blue eyes found a boy whose Far Eastern boy’s summer uniform was made into a ninja outfit. He looked to the blonde walking to his right and spoke.

“Well, I suppose you could call it a job.”

“Heh heh. Is that so? You just keep finding new jobs to do, Master Tenzou.”

“Judge. This work is important for us at the moment. We need to finish remodeling the Musashi as soon as possible so we can get the cooperation of Date and Mogami in Oushuu.”

“Oh, my. You know a lot about politics, Master Tenzou.”

“Judge. Most of our lessons in class have been focused on it lately. But...”

Tenzou faced the blonde.

“Could you please stop pretending to be Mary-dono, Toori-dono?”

Tenzou saw the idiot give him a look of surprise, but he knew reacting would be playing right into the other boy’s hands. Instead, he chose a comment to restrain the idiot.

“Besides, your face is nothing at all like Mary-dono’s.”

The blonde crossdresser froze in the middle of lifting his giant fake breasts with the bucket. The idiot then dropped the bucket in the passageway and took what he probably thought was a tragic pose.

“What’s wrong with my costume!?”

“For one, you aren’t anything like Mary-dono. The size and jiggle are completely wrong, you’re completely insane, and I would go on but I don’t want to hurt your feelings. Really, you should just stop this.”

“Y-you don’t hold back, do you!? And you hurt my feelings by trying not to hurt my feelings!”

The idiot gave an exaggerated sigh in a troubled pose.

“And now that you’ve ‘Scarred’ my heart, I really am your wife.”

He’s as creepy as ever, so I need to ignore him, calmly decided Tenzou. *I need to change the subject.*

“Why are you here? Given where we’re meeting, shouldn’t you be there ahead of everyone else?”

“Well, I peeped on the girl’s bath at Asama’s place and now she’s trying to kill me.”

He looked up to see several targeting sign frames rising from the Asama Shrine while displaying parabolic arcs of the predicted ballistic course. Those sign frames searched for their target from the sky above the Musashi. Tenzou noticed people screaming and running away whenever the sights landed on them.

“W-wait, Toori-dono! Those are sights for slaying sub-dragons! I really don’t want to be caught in that blast, so please get away from me!!”

“Ehh, but Blondie doesn’t want to die alooone.”

“Toori-dono, when shaking your breasts, you need to do it more like this and this.”

“Oh, I’ve been doing some training with imaginary breasts while watching Asama, but I guess it wasn’t enough!”

“Judge. You’re focusing too much on it. Yes, be more restrained. ...Judge. Very

good. You've got the hang of it now, so go die on your own."

"Y-you aren't listening at all, are you!?"

Please shut up, thought Tenzou as he ignored the idiot who was jumping up and down and waving his arms in protest. *And you aren't controlling the bouncing properly when jumping around like that.*

But, thought Tenzou as he looked back to the crossdresser.

"You really don't change do you, Toori-dono?"

Or is he only pretending to be the same? Even this crossdresser has to have felt something from that loss. He has to have. Right? S-surely even he would...w-wouldn't he? I can count on that, can't I? B-but he is an idiot. Wh-which is it?

"Nnnn, Tenzou-kuuun? What's the matterrrrr?"

"Kh. D-damn this boy!"

At any rate, reacting to the idiot would help nothing.

"By the way, Toori-dono, isn't Adele-dono supposed to be your bodyguard?"

"Yeah, but she peeped on the bath with me and now I think she's soaking in the bath thinking about the unfairness of our hierarchical society."

Adele-dono has a lot to worry about too, thought Tenzou.

Her mobile shell had been damaged in the previous battles. Musashi King Yoshinao knew a lot about its maintenance for some reason, so he was repairing it. But...

...He had to order some parts from Hexagone Française recently, didn't he?

They were in Mito which had a connection to Hexagone Française, so that had apparently not been too difficult to arrange. At the same time, they had ordered some equipment from Kantou IZUMO based on their experience in the battle against Maeda Toshiie's "Million Prison Gate Army" (name by Neshinbara) near Magdeburg.

Others were also working to strengthen their equipment, their spells, or themselves, but...

...That could easily be a sign of how worried we all are.

How much will the improvements here really matter? wondered Tenzou.

Their enemies were P.A. Oda, the Oda clan, and Hashiba who would later rule the Far East according to the history recreation. Not only did Hashiba have the backing of P.A.O.M., the primary academy of P.A. Oda, but they controlled half of M.H.R.R. and had conquered K.P.A. Italia to obtain the authority of the Pope-Chancellor.

They essentially controlled the Testament Union at this point.

...Our enemy is powerful.

Meanwhile, what were they doing?

The Musashi's weapons and other modifications were meant to fight that enemy, but no one knew if they could actually win.

Most likely, the Musashi and everyone else were strengthening themselves as a way of sweeping aside their unease. To put it another way...

...We only just barely trust ourselves.

The student council led by the crossdresser had been the ones to decide on the Musashi's modifications and to continue with their current policies. No clear opposition had turned up, but that was only because the residential districts of the different ships had been split up on the surface and because Neshinbara was using his knowledge of the public opinion to manage information on the divine network. So...

"We need to move on to the next step as soon as possible."

"Tenzou."

The crossdresser smiled his way while squeezing and lifting his giant fake breasts between his elbows.

"Don't rush things, okay?"

"What are you talking about?"

He decided to answer the idiot this time and someone standing at a corner up ahead turned his way.

“Master Tenzou.”

He looked over and found the real one.

“Mary-dono.”

The idiot clung to his right arm and wiggled his body.

“Master Tenzouuuu, who is that girrrrrl!?”

“Oh, my. Master Wet Man, are you visiting the human world dressed like a girl today?”

“I kind of expected this, but she isn’t listening at all...”

The idiot hung his head, so Tenzou started dragging him toward their meetup point. Meanwhile, Mary laughed quietly in her throat.

“Heh heh. Master Wet Man, you’re a little tired, aren’t you?”

“...Is he really?”

“Hey, Tenzou. Why do you look so surprised? I get tired too, you know? I can’t give you any details, but, um, well, I’ve been up late at night a lot, you know? You know what I’m talking about, don’t you?”

“Do you have any idea what it feels like to be told something you really don’t want to know?”

“Now, now.” Mary cut in with a bitter smile and looked toward the crossdresser. “Judge. The ether surrounding your body has had that color for a while now.”

“Ehhh?”

The crossdresser frowned, but Tenzou could not tell if it was for show or unintentional. But Mary had the blood of a high-level spirit and she could use spirits, so he could trust what she said.

“Mary-dono, how about we take this...thing...by early and get something to eat?”

“Judge. We’re meeting up at the Blue Thunder, aren’t we? In that case...”

Mary lined up alongside them and faced starboard, toward Tama.

“...?”

Suddenly, Tenzou’s attention turned in a different direction.

A few large sign frames appeared to sound the alarm and to tell everyone to stay away from the materials yard on the port side of the ship’s stern.

“What...?”

...Did some of the materials collapse?

Tenzou opened his own sign frame, instructed the members of his 1st Special Duty team to investigate the scene, and then sighed. Mary asked a question while looking in the same direction.

“Should we examine that materials yard on the way to the Blue Thunder on Tama?”

“Oh, um, I just arranged to have that done, so no. And we aren’t going to Tama.”

“...? But that’s where the Blue Thunder is.”

“Judge. It certainly is.”

As they walked down the residential road, a home/restaurant came into view on the right. The restaurant portion was small, but Mary read what the metal sign on the edge of the eaves said.

“Blue Thunder?”

“Judge. There’s a Blue Thunder here too. ...This one is Toori-dono and the Aoi family’s home.”

And...

“This one is also known as the Main Blue Thunder. It’s where we’re going to prepare for the meeting with the Date clan tonight and confirm our future plans.”

Chapter 6: Meeting Participant in Two Places at Once

第六章

『二重在所の会合人』



どちらが元かより
どちらが後かより
どちらが消えなかったか
配点 (どちらも)

More than which one came first

More than which one came second

Which one did not disappear?

Point Allocation (Both)

The aroma of butter and cooked wheat permeated that space.

It was a café filled with tables for two or four, and between those tables...

“Hey, Aoi, about that outfit...”

Masazumi called out to the crossdresser who was waiting the tables in nothing but an apron. She glared and pointed at him from one of the tables for four, but she hesitated over what to say.

“Are you insane?”

...Please tell me yes. That would make this so much easier.

Over by the room’s entrance, Asama glared at him and sent some kind of document to the guard station, but it was likely arrangements for the meeting later that night. Maybe.

Meanwhile, the apron crossdresser placed a long pizza on the table.

“Eat up. I guess I’ll be paying for you all.”

“Isn’t this your restaurant?”

“Technically, it’s the place my mom originally used. I’m the part-time manager.”

“I see,” said Mary sitting across from Crossunite at the port-most table. She looked back and forth between Aoi and Crossunite before continuing. “They explained this to me on the way here. Master Wet Man reopened this place on a whim when he was no longer visiting the Tama Blue Thunder.”

“Right, right. Mom was originally here and someone else ran the other one, but when it ended up vacant for certain reasons, mom closed this place and started using the other one. For a while, I ate breakfast at the other one, but I

stopped when we lost Horizon. ...And around middle school, I didn't feel like just wandering around after school."

"That's right," chimed in the Aoi sister who was passing out glasses of ginger ale.

She glanced to the spices on the kitchen counter, to the window, and to Asama.

"A lot happened here too. And when my foolish brother was wondering what to do, the government office showed up insisting all buildings on the surface carry out some kind of duty. At first we sold mom's inventory, but then he started cooking here too since we had the equipment."

"I see," said Masazumi just as Mary had.

She had heard about those siblings' past when in Mikawa, but this was her first time hearing about this in particular. If she had not run across Aoi earlier...

...It probably would have been a while before I had a chance to come here.

People are full of surprises, she thought. You try to understand them, but it's never enough.

And so she kept her eyes on Aoi.

"You give things a lot of thought, don't you?"

"Yep, especially my gags."

The apron crossdresser lined up some tarts on the table.

Masazumi heard some laughter from the side. It came from Mitotsudaira who turned to face Mary.

"When Margot told you about her past before, you didn't realize she was talking about this place, did you?"

"Judge. I'm shocked... So is this something of a hideout for all of you?"

"That's right," said Aoi. "Tenzou, you need to tell Mary this stuff. You don't need to worry about my feelings. I know Mary won't get any weird suspicions or anything."

"Well..."

Crossunite scratched at his head and Mary smiled his way.

“But I appreciate how Master Tenzou worries about people’s feelings.”

“I am glad to hear it...”

“Ha ha,” laughed the crossdresser as he brought out another pizza.

What a harmonious atmosphere, thought Masazumi. And...

...Is this their normal atmosphere?

They tended to gather at school, the battlefield, or somewhere a lot like a battlefield. She could only think of one other time they had gathered somewhere private like this.

...Yes, it was when we gathered in front of the Blue Thunder after winning at Mikawa.

It was a different location today, but it was still the Blue Thunder.

But this still isn’t their normal selves, she decided. *The word “normal” hardly applies given the Musashi’s condition and the surrounding situation.*

At the very least...

“We need to work toward a comeback.”

And it’s our job to make sure that happens, she added just before the idiot tapped her head just once.

She wondered what he was doing, but...

...Oh.

She remembered that he had put his wig on her during Mikatagahara.

“———”

She decided to relax her shoulders and told herself she never again wanted to do something that would cause the others to lose their trust in her.

She gave a mental nod and the idiot handed a pizza cutter to Horizon who sat across from him. Then he grabbed her hand.

“Cut it with this, Horizon. Got that? Don’t do anything weird that’ll scare me, okay?”

“Oh? But this would ruin the flavor, so could you let go of my hand first, Toori-sama?”

“Tch. ...Oh, but we can’t let it get cold. So Horizon, Nate, Bell-san, Mary, and the other one over there, feel free to get started. That leaves...”

“Judge.” Heidi raised her hand and pointed outside while operating a sign frame by the wall. “We have plans after this. ...Oh, and it involves a meal, so you don’t have to worry about us.”

Muneshige smiled next to Gin.

“We already ate.”

“Then I’ll wrap up a tart just like these and you can eat it after you get home.”

“Thanks,” said Heidi.

Masazumi took that to mean she did not plan to eat much wherever she was going.

To the right of Horizon, Suzu smiled a little as she took the plate of pizza Horizon passed her.

“It’s been so long since...I’ve had one of...Toori-kun’s tarts... Can I...have one too?”

“Sure, sure. I’ll make room for five and cook them up, so any other takers?”

Everyone seemed to raise their hand, so Masazumi did too.

A sign frame appeared in the center of the room as if responding to her action.

Mal-Ga: “Make one for us too! We’ll be there right after work!”

Me: “If you insist. Maybe I’ll throw in the pot stickers I’ve been working on lately.”

Mal-Ga: “No, thank you!”

The apron-wearing nudist nodded as Naito sent word that they did want the pot stickers after all.

“Hmm, then I guess I’ll have to cut them up. Is that okay, Bell-san? I’ll make sure to also have some for your mom and dad ready for takeout.”

“Eh!? Oh, y-yes...th-that’s fine.”

Masazumi tried to figure out what Suzu’s frantically waving hands were supposed to mean.

At any rate, Gin lowered her giant false arm and tilted her head where she stood next to Heidi and Shirojiro.

“You asked us to join you, but is there any reason for us to be here?”

Next to her, Muneshige seemed to have the same question. They were trying not to say anything unnecessary, but Masazumi responded to their true question.

“Judge. There is.” She faced Muneshige. “The first order of business in this emergency meeting concerns you, Tachibana Muneshige. You are currently a normal student, but Musashi’s student council and chancellor’s officers wishes to nominate you as a temporary aide to the Vice Chancellor. As a nomination, it isn’t settled yet, but at least understand that we are making the necessary preparations. In other words...”

In other words...

“I want to send the two of you out to the front lines if we can.”

The first to react was Gin rather than Muneshige. She shook the small hat unique to a Tres España summer uniform.

“Are you attempting to take in Tres España to restore the Musashi’s rights?”

...I had a feeling they’d be cautious.

So Masazumi spoke the rebuttal she had already prepared.

“How will making Tres España’s former 1st and 3rd Special Duty Officers aides to our Vice Chancellor restore our rights?”

That must have been what Gin expected because she only said “I see” and corrected her posture. It was as if she had only wanted to know that Masazumi understood that.

A sighing voice broke the silence that followed.

“Differences in rank mean different things to different people, don’t they?”

It was Mitotsudaira who sat across from Masazumi on Horizon’s left. She grabbed a slice of pizza and her nose twitched as the apron crossdresser carried over a pot of egg and spinach.

“This is purely meant to strengthen our fighting force, isn’t it? After all...”

She was briefly distracted when Horizon fanned the over the aroma of the pot and plate the idiot handed her, but she finally recovered.

“Excuse me. ...Um, to be blunt, our Vice Chancellor has lost her primary weapon, so we could use the help of someone who fought evenly with Shibata Katsuie at Magdeburg.”

“Judge. I see.” Gin erased her expression. “When will Tonbokiri be repaired?”

The answer came from Naomasa who was leaning against the wall opposite Gin and to Masazumi’s left.

“We left it with Kantou IZUMO, but they don’t even have an estimate. Our Musashi IZUMO gathered what information it could, but it was special-made in Mikawa. With the core damaged, repairing it is a lot like remaking a Logismoí Óplo.”

A bitter smile rang out as Naomasa shrugged and looked Masazumi’s way.

“Masazumi, where is Futayo? I’ve been going back and forth on whether I should be the bearer of bad news or keep it from her.”

“Oh, Futayo went to the Tama Blue Thunder by mistake. ...Why are all of you hanging your heads?”

I did explain it to her, but since she can be a little hardheaded, maybe she thought I was mistaken. But anyway...

“It would be a pain to have her head over here now, so I told her to eat there. ...Asama.”

“Yes, I’m keeping a log of the meeting, so I’ll send it to everyone involved with a security spell. When people are taking part via sign frame, there’s a possibility of someone spying on it.”

“Hm? Tomo, someone could be spying over the divine network?”

“Judge,” replied Masazumi while shaking her head.

Is this what Mukai’s gesture before meant? she wondered with a bitter smile in her heart.

“Normally, most student council and chancellor’s officers meetings are sent to the representative committee, the provisional council, any other related committees, and the teams working under the Special Duty Officers.”

“I would rather not think about it,” said Crossunit, “but does that mean everyone’s been seeing the awful things we say and do?”

“Crossunit, the meetings are generally focused on me, you know?”

“Judge.” Horizon nodded expressionlessly. “You have nothing to worry about, Masazumi-sama. Just because your jokes bomb does not mean you actually lose any...thing...”

She trailed off and an odd sweat began pouring down her expressionless face. After a moment, she looked to Asama by the wall.

“Please help me out. Make it something funny. Yes, Masazumi-sama’s life depends on it.”

“Ehh!? Wh-why me!? I’m not a funny girl!”

“You must have very high standards for ‘funny’, Asama-sama. ...Now, go.”

“Eh? Go? Um, wait...”

Sensing everyone’s focus on her, Asama blushed and pressed her back against the wall. Finally, she squeezed her arms around her breasts to accentuate the two mounds and the parting line down the center.

“Look, I have a butt on my chest.”

Mal-Ga: “She’s a shrine maiden, so why does she always come up with that kind of joke? Does she want me to take notes?”

Flat Vassal: “Um, I’m on guard duty out front, but can I click my tongue?”

Righteousness: “I’m on guard duty too, but can you all please get back on topic?”

Asama: “Ahhhh, I’m sorry everyone...”

“That’s right,” said Masazumi.

She put a slice of pizza in her mouth and wished she had waited until after this to take a bath.

...For now, the chancellor’s officers and student council can share what’s going on.

“Secretary Neshinbara isn’t here...but let’s get started anyway.”

“Judge,” agreed Heidi. “Neshinbara was scheduled to check the retrieved resources on the back of Okutama, so he should be here after that. He’s probably digging through all the doujinshi.”

“C’mon, Auge-chan, Neshinbara isn’t that kind of guy. ...If he was digging through them, he’d definitely be giving us an overly-excited running commentary. Something else must be keeping him.”

“Hm, what could he be doing?”

Heidi and Erimaki, the Mouse on her shoulder, both tilted their heads and Shirojiro spoke up next to her.

“Heidi, renew the arrangements for the cargo and other matters.”

“Judge. Asama-chi, can you wait five seconds to start the meeting? ...There, all done!”

As soon as Heidi smiled and tapped the “approved” mark on her sign frame, Asama nodded.

“Then I’ll place a barrier around this room and the surrounding area. I’ll make sure Naito and Naruze are automatically added in once they arrive.”

Gold Mar: “Roger that.”

Hanami: “Constructing barrier. Clap!”

A few sign frames blossomed and Masazumi felt her surroundings grow a little bright. Then she heard a distant sound like rustling bamboo grass.

...An information-blocking barrier, huh?

Suddenly, she heard Asama's voice.

"Ah! Excuse me! That's it! Wait! Please leave everything as is!!"

Masazumi turned around to find Asama pointing their way. Her finger and Mitotsudaira and Naomasa's gazes were all directed toward something.

"Horizon's sign frame!"

Asama saw it clearly. The torii cross sign frame next to Horizon's face was staticky, but it did not go away.

One would occasionally appear independent of Horizon's will.

...It really did come out!?

Horizon's sign frames came from the OS controlling her automaton body, so they did not belong to the Asama Shrine which primarily managed Musashi's Shinto control.

That was why Horizon's OS had reacted to Asama's information-blocking barrier.

A normal independent OS would be caught by the defense program and automatically rejected.

This one, however, was forcibly negating that, even if it had grown somewhat staticky.

...But this information-blocking barrier uses the same format as Musashi's stealth.

"What is this, Asama-sama?"

Horizon herself focused on Asama without seeming particularly worried. If it was a spell program, Asama had the specialist knowledge to understand what it meant. But more importantly...

“Um, can you control that sign frame for me? ...Hanami.”

Hanami jumped from Asama’s shoulder and toward Horizon. She pulled a few program sign frames from her sleeves and held them up for Horizon to see.

“I can only guess at this point, but that is most likely a program meant to link Horizon’s sign frames to our divine transmission network. If her OS was made in Mikawa, I should be able to sync with it using an Asama-style OS prayer, since Mikawa is under our jurisdiction. Horizon, can you start it up and install it?”

“Judge. You need my administrator privileges, don’t you?”

“Yes, exactly. You should be able to install it like that.”

Asama inhaled once and continued.

“But this is your decision, Horizon. This program is meant to sync your sign frames with our divine transmission network, which will make it much more convenient for you to take part in our meetings. But the control information could have other applications depending on how it is used, so it could lead to something neither of us wants. So...”

“Asama-sama.”

Horizon used her finger to slide the torii icon on the spell Hanami held up for her and she placed her own sign frame on top of it.

“I do not wish to be a doll that can only be spoken to. I believe my sign frames have started appearing because I have grown accustomed to my emotions and my abilities are being strengthened. If I can use this, I have determined I should do so even if it is not easy.”

Her sign frame and the icon both moved. The icon became countless sign frames and Horizon’s torii cross one absorbed them all while inspecting their contents.

“Beginning Confirmation.”

Everyone looked to the displayed words. Asama knew them quite well.

“It’s performing a quarantine inspection. It has to be sure the program I created is safe.”

“Authenticated: Asama Shrine Main Prayer.”

“Inspection: Sexual Inspection – Incomplete, Perversion Inspection – Incomplete, R-Rating Inspection – Incomplete.”

“Wow...”

The others backed away and a dull sweat appeared on Asama’s face.

...This is standard! I swear this is a standard check!

Horizon gave a mysterious thumb’s up, but Asama had no idea how to respond.

At any rate, the inspection soon finished and the spell was incorporated. All of the sign frames closed and Horizon’s vanished too.

“Did it fail, Asama-sama?”

“No, it just needs to restart. Horizon, imagine you want to talk with someone and raise your right hand like this.”

Horizon raised her right hand and a sign frame appeared at her fingertips. But...

“The Asama Shrine?”

“No, it just uses one of our spell sign frames to call up yours. See?”

As she spoke, the standard Asama Shrine sign frame vanished and Horizon’s torii cross one opened.

Satisfied with the impressed voices coming from the others, Asama explained to Horizon.

“It wasn’t installed directly to your OS. Instead, I had it installed to your OS’s spare memory. So when it starts up, it activates one of our spells which calls in and stabilizes your sign frame. The internal processing simply recorded your authorization procedure and won’t interfere with the main process, so it should be safer.”

“Oh?” Naomasa raised her eyebrows as she looked to Horizon’s sign frame and commented with the others. “Asama-chi, you have some surprising talents.”

“Yes, I’m surprised you can do this, Tomo.”

“I know, right? It’s really surprising that Asama can do this.”

“Um, I get the feeling you’re rejecting a big part of me.”

Horizon gave another thumb’s up, so Asama did the same.

Horizon then made her sign frame appear and disappear a few times, but...

“Judge. Understood. ...Thank you very much, Asama-sama.”

“No, no. With a unique OS like yours, it’s safer for both of us if we have a way of speaking to each other. I will do whatever I can if you have any problems, so I look forward to working with you. ...Okay, um, Masazumi, sorry for the interruption.”

Masazumi smiled bitterly and nodded her way, but...

“Sorry we’re late!”

The café door opened and two colors entered along with the outside air. The black and gold wore summer uniforms and both had six wings.

“Oh, Naito and Naruze are here. ...Sorry about all the time spent on setup, Masazumi. You can start the meeting now.”

“Okay.”

Masazumi inhaled.

She opened her mouth after noting that everyone’s focus had shifted back to her after turning toward Naito and Naruze as they sat by the wall.

“For the upcoming secret meeting with the Date clan, I wanted to gather Musashi Ariadust Academy’s student council and chancellor’s officers to check over our current and future policies.”

She was confident they all pretty much knew what those were.

“Currently, we are dealing with the effects that our loss at Mikatagahara will have on Musashi and the other nations. Then we need to know what to do about Oushuu.”

“Seijun, have you made a decision about what comes next?”

“Judge,” said Masazumi. “Oushuu has been in a constant struggle between Sviet Rus, Mogami, and Date, but Russia is currently fighting P.A. Oda and both Mogami and Date have stopped doing anything ever since Hashiba stopped by two weeks ago to ‘check on their history recreation’.”

But...

“According to the Testament descriptions, Sviet Rus and Mogami both begin to decline after Sekigahara. At the same time, the Date clan conquers Oushuu. So my tentative plan is to keep cooperation with Date as our bare minimum standard of success here. Only after getting Date on our side will we move on to Mogami and Sviet Rus.”

In other words...

“At tonight’s secret meeting with Date, we need to establish a pipeline with the Date clan no matter what it takes. In my mind, that is our best possible move here.”

Chapter 7: Advisor in an Unseen Place

第七章

『見えず場所の相談者』



算段とは
相手を数え上げることか
己を数え積むことか
配点（戦術と戦略）

When finding a way

Are you counting your opponent

Or are you counting yourself?

Point Allocation (Tactics and Strategy)

The smell of butter filled the café and so did a voice. The voice belonged to Masazumi who had Tsukinowa on her shoulder.

“We are about to hold a secret meeting with the Date clan who will ultimately become the rulers of Oushuu. Their territory designated by the Testament Union is Eastern Oushuu Sibir. Oushuu’s frigid harmonic territories give it a unique distribution of races, so their Sendai Date Academy is a combat academy with an even more diverse racial makeup than Musashi.”

“Seijun, could you dumb that down a little for me?”

At the idiot’s request, Masazumi tried to figure out how to get even him to understand.

...Although he’s probably giving this a lot of thought.

I can’t be too mean to him, she decided before putting on a smile and answering.

“Okay, today Masazumi-sensei will be telling you about the Date clan that lives on the north end of the Far East. Oh? Aoi-kun, why are you dressed like that? Did you hit your head?”

“D-damn you. Did you have to bring it down to an elementary school level!?”

An elementary school level is really pretty high lately, she thought while ignoring him.

“Anyway, um, let’s keep this simple. My suggestion is to support the history recreation of the Date clan, since they will eventually rule Oushuu, and to gather the forces of Oushuu together. ...But first, we need to understand the situation in the Oushuu region.”

Masazumi had Tsukinowa display a sign frame with a map of Oushuu, Kantou,

and Jouetsu.

She grabbed the opposite corners of the sign frame to enlarge it and then tapped the back to brighten it.

“Three forces are currently fighting over the area from Oushuu to Jouetsu – that is, the northern end of the Far Eastern mainland. One is the Date clan. They rule eastern Oushuu by the Pacific Ocean.”

She lightly tapped Oushuu’s eastern coast and then tapped the western coast.

“The second force is the Mogami clan. They rule western Oushuu.”

She then traced her finger down from northern Kantou to Jouetsu as if placing a lid on the side of the other two.

“The last one is Sviet Rus. These three nations originally used discussions to make a show of conflict while secretly seeking a peaceful completion of their history recreations. They probably wanted to avoid the danger of fighting national-level conflicts in the freezing land of Oushuu.”

Naruze nodded and spoke in her usual calm voice.

“What were their official conflicts like before Hashiba showed up to check on their history recreation?”

“Originally, Mogami opposed both Date and Sviet Rus, Sviet Rus had Mogami to their east and P.A. Oda on their west, and Date clashed with Mogami from the east. Of course, both Mogami and Date have fallen silent since Hashiba arrived to check on the history recreation. And while Sviet Rus is continuing their fight against P.A. Oda, they’ve stopped any anti-Mogami actions. Altogether, the current balance of power looks like this.”

●Oushuu Powers

Date Clan: Rules eastern Oushuu – Used to oppose Mogami, currently not fighting.

Mogami Clan: Rules western Oushuu – Used to oppose Sviet Rus and Date, currently not fighting.

Sviet Rus: Rules Kantou and Jouetsu – Currently fighting P.A. Oda.

“In other words,” said Asama as she checked some things on her sign frame. “In Oushuu’s current state, negotiating with Date would be the safest and closest option. But these three nations have strong connections thanks to those peaceful discussions, right?”

Mitotsudaira took over from there. She licked some cheese from her index finger and turned her somewhat wrinkled brow toward the others.

“Oushuu’s provisional borders will be updated twice: once when Hashiba conquers the Far East and once by the Matsudaira clan after Sekigahara. With that in mind, the different clans should be letting the future heads of the clans interact to prepare for the peaceful progression and resolution of the history recreation.”

“And so Hashiba’s arrival has prevented the three nations from that peaceful resolution?” asked Naomasa. “Now, I understand why Hashiba would try to hold Mogami, Date, and Sviet Rus in check. The odds are good we would end up working with them. I don’t know if this was Hashiba’s doing or an independent decision of those three nations, but why have Mogami and Date ended their conflict? Is there a good reason for that?”

Masazumi and everyone else looked around when they heard Naomasa’s question. They all looked to each other in search of someone.

Flat Vassal: “It feels weird when the secretary isn’t here to say ‘That’s an excellent question!’ ”

Righteousness: “You people have the weirdest sense of unity.”

...It’s not so much unity as it is something we feel obliged to do.

This must be tough for an Ariadust beginner. I’ve been stuck at the speed limit myself.

However, one person in the group did move: Horizon. She turned around to look at everyone there, locked onto her target, and expressionlessly opened her mouth.

“Do you know the answer, Tenzou-sama!? Do you know why those three nations have ended their conflict!?”

“Ehh!? Me!?”

Masazumi felt sorry for him but also felt no desire to take over for him. Meanwhile, Mary smiled toward Tenzou and placed her hands on her cheeks.

“Oh, my. You know the answer, Master Tenzou? You know why those three nations have ended their conflict?”

“Judge! I do!!”

Crossunite immediately answered with a clenched fist.

...The most important thing in life is to remain positive on the inside!!

As Tenzou did his best to convince himself of that, Naruze wrote “That’s loser talk” on her crop mark Magie Figur and showed it to him, but he decided to ignore it. He knew what he had to say first.

“Most likely, the three nations ended their conflict because Hashiba asked them to. ...After all, their conflict is rather dangerous for Hashiba and P.A. Oda.”

Because...

“It is related to Oda Nobunaga’s assassination.”

Tenzou heard everyone quiet down. As they stopped moving and speaking, he alone nodded.

“This is all about the Testament descriptions. Historically, there are two battles in which Mogami or Date clash with Sviet Rus, so Hashiba should be able to force them to recreate them. However, doing so would cause a bit of trouble related to Nobunaga.”

After all...

“While there are two battles in which Mogami – and later Mogami and Date – clash with Sviet Rus, they both happen after Nobunaga’s death.”

“Listen.” Tenzou raised two fingers. “There are two records of battles between

Mogami or Date and Uesugi aka Sviet Rus. The first is the Battle of Jugorigahara. When Mogami begins to invade from the east, the great Sviet Rus warrior, Honjou Shigenaga, intercepts them. Date also works with Sviet Rus to attack Mogami, so it gets a little complicated.

“The other is the Battle of Keichodewa. When Uesugi heads out to join Hashiba during the Battle of Sekigahara, Mogami and Date attack them as part of Matsudaira’s side. Shigenaga I mentioned before and the rest of Uesugi’s main force fight back. Both of these battles occur after Nobunaga’s death.”

“Um, can I ask something?” The idiot raised his hand. “What does it matter to Monkey Girl if they hold history recreations from after Nobunaga dies? I mean, Monkey Girl already invaded Edo and Satomi and isn’t that only supposed to happen in her last years after Nobunaga’s death?”

“Lord Shibata is involved in the Sviet Rus side of things and Nobunaga is assassinated while Lord Shibata is busy fighting Sviet Rus.”

Meaning...

“This is not a Hashiba-focused history recreation like the Bunroku Campaign in which Hashiba invaded Kantou. When they carry out the history recreation related to Sviet Rus and Oushuu, they will be forced to also carry out the history recreation related to Shibata’s forces. As a result, they would be bringing on the recreation of Nobunaga’s assassination and the Shibata forces’ retreat. The related nations are sure to demand it.”

“True,” muttered Naruze while crossing her arms with her empty glass between her fingers. “Shibata has really been ‘taking his time’ when it comes to his invasion of Sviet Rus. If that’s so they can delay Nobunaga’s assassination because ‘Shibata hasn’t invaded Sviet Rus yet’, then I can see why they went out of their way to make him Vice Chancellor of M.H.R.R. It was to buy time. And his trip to Magdeburg wasn’t for the history recreation either. It was to delay his invasion of Sviet Rus and demonstrate that it still isn’t time for Nobunaga’s death.”

“Most likely,” agreed Tenzou.

“My king?” asked Mitotsudaira as she looked to Toori.

Tenzou could still see a smile on the idiot's face, but he had stopped moving for a while now.

Mitotsudaira looked at him with lowered eyebrows, as did Asama and Kimi. Horizon held out a pizza cut into small slices.

"How about you eat some more? Saying everything that happened at Magdeburg was only to buy time before Nobunaga's death is a rather pessimistic view of the events there. We were protected there, we achieved victory, and... yes, Adele-sama needs to be re-tested."

Flat Vassal: "Yeah, maybe it's because of how much I loved on those dogs in Magdeburg. Sorry, but this is going to delay our school trip."

Vice President: "Well, the Musashi can't exactly move right now, so it doesn't matter if it's delayed."

I wonder where we'll end up going, thought Tenzou. And...

"Toori-dono? Why are you being so still?"

"Eh? Oh, yeah. It isn't a big deal...well, maybe it is."

"What is it?"

"Judge." The idiot nodded and looked to Masazumi. "Seijun, you aren't used to your summer uniform yet, are you? The underarm is cut wider than the winter one and your sleeves aren't attached very tightly, so when you lean forward to eat the pizza, I can see right inside."

Masazumi quickly wrapped her arms around her body and the other Far Eastern girls checked their own underarms.

Then the idiot turned to Tenzou.

"But Shibata's rumored to have started that invasion, right?"

"Judge. His forces have shown up in western Russia, near the floating city of Novgorod. ...Even if they want to avoid Nobunaga's assassination, they can't stop advancing history entirely. And Sviet Rus is preparing a defense."

"Can they defend against this?"

"Let me say it again: this is all about the Testament descriptions. Sviet Rus's

Uesugi forces were generally weaker than Oda, but there was one time when they defeated and drove back the Oda forces. And that was...”

That was...

“The Battle of Tedorigawa. A castle named Nanao Castle defected to Uesugi from Oda. When Shibata’s forces were sent out to support it, they were forced to fight a retreating battle because they did not know Nanao Castle had already fallen. Lord Shibata made a counterattack afterwards, but Nobunaga was assassinated partway through and he was ultimately forced to retreat.”

Neshinbara-dono would be having a field day with this if he were here, thought Tenzou as he showed a sign frame to everyone. It contained a timeline of the battles and other information he had mentioned.

Tenzou’s Summarized History Notes

—Nanao Castle defects to Oda’s side within Uesugi territory.



—The Battle of Tedorigawa (1577)

Shibata’s forces are sent out to support Nanao Castle as it is under attack, but they’re forced to retreat.

Lord Shibata makes a counterattack afterwards, but retreats again due to Nobunaga’s assassination.

But afterwards, the Shibata clan (a different Shibata from Lord Shibata) also defects to Oda’s side and continually rebels on the west while Uesugi also clashes with Mogami on the east.



—The Battle of Jugorigahara (1587)

During an earlier conflict between Mogami and Date, Uesugi invades Mogami.

Honjou Shigenaga and others retrieve territory taken by Mogami.



—The Battle of Keichodewa (1600)

During Sekigahara, Uesugi is sent out as part of Hashiba's forces, but are stopped by an attack from Date and Mogami acting on Matsudaira's side. On the Matsudaira side, this is known as the Aizu Punishment.

"Why do you write your notes just like you talk?"

"I thought they might be a little too formal otherwise..."

But that summed up the events well enough.

"After the Battle of Tedorigawa, P.A. Oda will try for a counterattack but will ultimately be driven into retreat by Sviet Rus. However, Sviet Rus will be worn down by Mogami and rebels allied with Oda. That should make Sviet Rus reluctant to cause the Oda clan's retreat."

"Then...why aren't Mogami or Date moving either?" Gin tilted her head. "Mogami attacking Sviet Rus is one of the events leading into the Battle of Jugorigahara. Even if Sviet Rus wants to wait before starting Tedorigawa, I don't see why Mogami wouldn't go ahead and force their hand with one of the conditions leading to Jugorigahara. That sounds like a huge bargaining chip that Mogami and Date have over Hashiba."

"I can explain that one."

Masazumi was the one to speak up.

Masazumi retightened the underarms of her uniform and opened a few sign frames. She had met her father during the day and the Provisional Council had sent her some information afterwards, so she based this on that information.

"Hashiba generally uses its military might and invasions as a show of force. ... But Tachibana Wife, your question is related to the terrain from Kantou to Oushuu, isn't it?"

"Judge," said Gin. "Thanks to the frigid land, Hashiba should have a difficult time invading Oushuu. That makes me think Date and Mogami should be able to negotiate on equal footing with Hashiba."

“I agree with you there.”

Unfortunately, she was forced to add a “but”.

“But while Date’s reason is unknown, we do know why the Mogami clan is giving in to Hashiba’s demands.”

That being...

“Komahime is the daughter of Mogami Yoshiaki, the current head of the Mogami clan, and she becomes the concubine of Hashiba Hidetsugu, Hashiba’s nephew.”

Mitotsudaira felt a faint tremor run down her back. After all...

...Komahime is a hostage of the history recreation.

Mitotsudaira had been young when it had been determined she would gain this land in Kantou, but she had still studied the surrounding area. She had come to know how Komahime would be treated and had sympathized with her.

After all, when she had been sent all alone to Musashi as a child, she too had essentially been a hostage that Hexagone Française had given to the Testament Union. Of course, it had been planned out by her mother and others from Hexagone Française, she had made friends even if in a roundabout way, and she had found a place for herself in Musashi. But...

“You said Hashiba visited Mogami to ‘check on their history recreation’ two weeks ago, didn’t you?”

Naomasa quietly clicked her tongue and spoke with disinterest in her voice.

“So it was due to how the Battle of Mikatagahara ended, was it? And Komahime was...?”

“Judge.” Masazumi nodded. “For now, we don’t know what happened to her, but we have received word that the Jurakudai has arrived in Edo and that castle belongs to Hashiba Hidetsugu whose name had not previously been inherited.”

She had heard that down on the surface during the day.

“So that’s it,” said Naomasa. “Hashiba took control of Edo and Satomi as part

of the Korean expedition. That put them within range of the Mogami clan, so they used the history recreation to take Komahime hostage. Is that what happened? But Masazumi, what happens to Komahime after she's given to Hashiba?"

"That is not exactly good news." Mitotsudaira explained what she knew about Oushuu after studying it in the past. "Komahime...When her husband Hidetsugu angers Hashiba and is forced to commit suicide, she too is forced to commit suicide. In other words...Hashiba can now say whether the daughter of Mogami lives or dies."

You're right about that not being good news, silently commented Tenzou.

"The Date clan's Testament descriptions also have Lady Masamune insisting her younger brother Kojirou commits suicide on suspicion of rebellion. I believe that was never carried out, but it could be a problem if that were used as a bargaining chip."

"True." Mitotsudaira turned his way. "Of course, that isn't all. Even with the Testament descriptions, Hashiba can't invade Oushuu. The same goes for the M.H.R.R. Catholics that support her. ...But she can interfere with Oushuu. We touched on this earlier, but..."

But...

"The Peace Edict and the Oushuu Punishment. After Nobunaga's death, all conflict was banned in the Far East and territorial borders were determined as punishment against those in Oushuu and Kantou that violated that ban."

Mitotsudaira's sharp gaze swept across the others.

"Do you understand? Hashiba has the right to ban Far Eastern conflicts and to determine the territories of the Oushuu nations. Plus, she has the great military might and control to back it up."

This really is troublesome, thought Masazumi.

The historical Hashiba had temporarily ruled the Far East and he had taken a

few different measures to increase his power. One of the policies he took during the early stages held a lot of meaning for Oushuu.

“The Peace Edict banned all conflict between clans inside the Far East and the Oushuu Punishment determined borders as a punishment to those in Oushuu who violated the ban. Hashiba can use the history recreation to decide how much territory each clan gets, so the Oushuu academies can’t take too strong a stance against her.”

There was one way to overturn that situation.

“As Musashi and the Matsudaira clan, we have to win at Sekigahara and determine those national borders for ourselves. But after our defeat, the other nations can’t exactly trust us.”

So...

“Hashiba has the control here.”

Masazumi knew they were unreliable. Matsudaira’s re-establishment of the borders after Hashiba’s death and after Sekigahara was nothing more than words in a prophetic history book that had stopped updating. To her, relying on the rules saying everyone had to follow that book felt too dependent. But...

“We need to make sure the post-Sekigahara world becomes a reality.”

Those words brought everyone to a stop. After a while, they all turned toward her.

She took a deep breath amid those gazes that seemed expectant, interested, and like they were testing her.

...Looks like they aren’t all trapped in a sense of helplessness.

Then we need to do something, she thought while clenching and raising her right fist.

“It’s time we think about what to do. Yes...the time to think about what to ‘do’ has long since been ‘due’.”

They all gasped.

Uqui: “Now, what are we to do about this criminal?”

Marube-ya: “Why does Masazumi always get ahead of herself like that?”

Scarred: “Um, I’m sorry, but what did that mean?”

Vice President: “Fine, I’m sorry! Yes, I’m sorry! I’m sorry, okay!?”

Me: “Well, I guess I’ll go whip something up to cleanse our palates.”

Masazumi took a breath to pull herself together. The idiot went to the kitchen and Horizon expressionlessly raised both her palms and told her “You’re still fine, for now”, but she wanted to ask what the “for now” meant.

“Um, listen. If Mogami and Date can’t do anything because of Hashiba, we need to push them to take action. And we need to work with Date and – if possible – Mogami and Sviet Rus as well. So first...”

She decided to say something grandiose.

“We will bring the Far East to a position where it is forced to recreate Nobunaga’s assassination.”

She inhaled and looked across the others.

“Oushuu’s history recreation is the starting point. If we can get Mogami and Date to take action and set things up for the Battle of Jugorigahara, Sviet Rus can complete the preparations for Nobunaga’s assassination related to Shibata’s forces in northern P.A. Oda. There are of course plenty of other conditions needed for the assassination, but we would be knocking off one of the big ones.”

And to do that...

“In the coming meeting with the Date clan, I want to set up a pipeline between us. Date becomes the ruler of Oushuu and they ultimately get that territory thanks to Matsudaira. We should both want to have a good relationship. ...But it’s going to take a lot to get there: Nobunaga’s assassination, Hashiba’s death, and the Battle of Sekigahara.”

But...

“Doing something about all that is my job.”

“Oh, hey, hey. Wait a sec, Seijun.”

The idiot’s voice suddenly cut in.

“What?”

She turned around and found him carrying over some fried potatoes. She was not exactly thrilled since some cultivars were banned, but...

“What is it, idiot?”

“Well, you’ve got a tendency to get all excited while thinking about all this complicated stuff, so let me give you a warning. Basically...well, I’m sure you know this, but when it comes to Nobunaga’s assassination...no forcing someone to die, okay?”

“—————”

You have to hit me where it hurts, don’t you? thought Masazumi, but the idiot only nodded and set down the plate.

“That was our starting point and Horizon confirmed that in England. It’s important to us, right? You often determine the ending with the very first branch point, so you really need to pay careful attention to what happens in the begin-... What’s that look for, Horizon!? It’s so fresh!”

Masazumi decided to ignore the idiot’s nonsense, but it was true he had something of a point.

...Our starting point, huh?

That’s true, she thought while relaxing her shoulders and looking to Horizon, Suzu, and Mitotsudaira.

...None of us has forgotten our starting point.

But the half-werewolf knight quickly pulled back the chopsticks she was about use to grab one of the small pizza slices.

“Is something the matter? Why are you looking at me?”

“Judge,” replied Masazumi as she adjusted her position in her chair.

...I can't believe this.

It was not that she had forgotten about their policy against forcing death onto others. It had simply grown so natural for them that she had stopped focusing on it. In other words, she had grown careless.

You can't let yourself worry that idiot, she scolded herself.

"Aoi is exactly right. If you cut out the more complicated parts, we have a single consensus: We want to create a world in which no one's death is simply accepted."

Righteousness: "Then what are you going to do about this meeting with Date?"

There was only one answer that question.

"I'm going to use the future as a bargaining chip. There's a lot we have to do to reach that future, but Matsudaira will guide the Far East to peace. It won't be easy, but using that as our foundation should be best."

Masazumi took a breath at that point.

"Hashiba used us to gain influence over Oushuu. Our defeat acted as a demonstration of what happens to anyone who opposed them. They scared Oushuu into obedience by showing how thoroughly they would crush them. So I'll get rid of that fear and I'll get rid of any history recreations that assume a loss."

So...

"If Hashiba is going to ensure the future through fear, I'll ensure the future by wiping away that fear."

Masazumi looked to the side where the nudist crossdresser stood in his apron. She briefly mistook him for a girl, so she gave him an expressionless command.

"Take off those clothes, you idiot."

"B-but you're always telling me to put clothes on! What kind of double standard is that!? But anyway..."

He smiled bitterly and tapped her head once.

...Are you telling me to do this right?

But then she heard him mutter something under his breath.

“I need to pull myself together too.”

Only the few closest people would have heard him, but someone began moving before she could determine what he meant. It was Naito by the wall.

The Technohexen saw her Magie Figur dancing after receiving a report from outside.

“Judge, they’re coming! I have a report from the Technohexen defense network set up in the sky outside the stealth barrier.”

A sound from outside played from Naito’s opened Magie Figur. It was the hard, solid, and piercing tremor of something crashing into the Ariake at high speed.

“I have a report from ‘Ariake’! We have a visitor on the Ariake’s top surface!”

An automaton’s announcement provided the identity of the visitor.

“We have determined them to be Date Vice Chancellor Date Narumi-sama! Over!”

A vast plain of white metal sat below the white sky.

It was the top surface of the Ariake. In the center, the Far East’s Guard Unit surrounded something while equipped with lightly armored IZUMO gear.

“Is that a dragon? Or a god of war? No, it’s too small.”

“Then is it a half-dragon? Don’t tell me it loves some oddly specific genre.”

“This could be trouble.”

The Guard Unit did not draw their weapons but kept their hands on the hilts and on their large shields while trying to describe what it was.

The object standing on the Ariake’s white armor was a piece of upright armor colored dark green and red. It was about three meters tall. While it had no wings on its back, it did have something like a single horn on the top of its face.

“Is that a caterpillar?”

“I’d prefer you called it a centipede. It is based on a dragon, though.”

The response was made with a female voice and it said more.

“Release – Unturning Centipede.”

It happened instantly. Before the Guard Unit could even take another breath, the torso and limbs of the dark green and red armor split down the center like a blooming flower.

<Mobile Shell DDS-002B ‘Unturning Centipede’ Release – Confirmed>

There was an almost animalistic roar and countless metallic noises. A full body left the armor as it opened up like a flower and that body wore a white and red Russian-style inner suit.

“I am Oushuu Sibir and Sendai Date Academy Vice Chancellor Date Narumi. I am here for an unofficial meeting with the Far East.”

The tall girl had long black hair and Unturning Centipede turned to a spray of ether light behind her. It was storing itself in a different space. The light scattered with a refreshing noise as Date Narumi raised her right hand.

Her eyebrows and drooping eyes bent.

“You can call me Narumi. Let’s try to get along, okay?”

The hand raised next to what could technically be called a smile was made of metal.

All four of her limbs were prosthetics.

●青雷亭本舗(葵家自宅)●



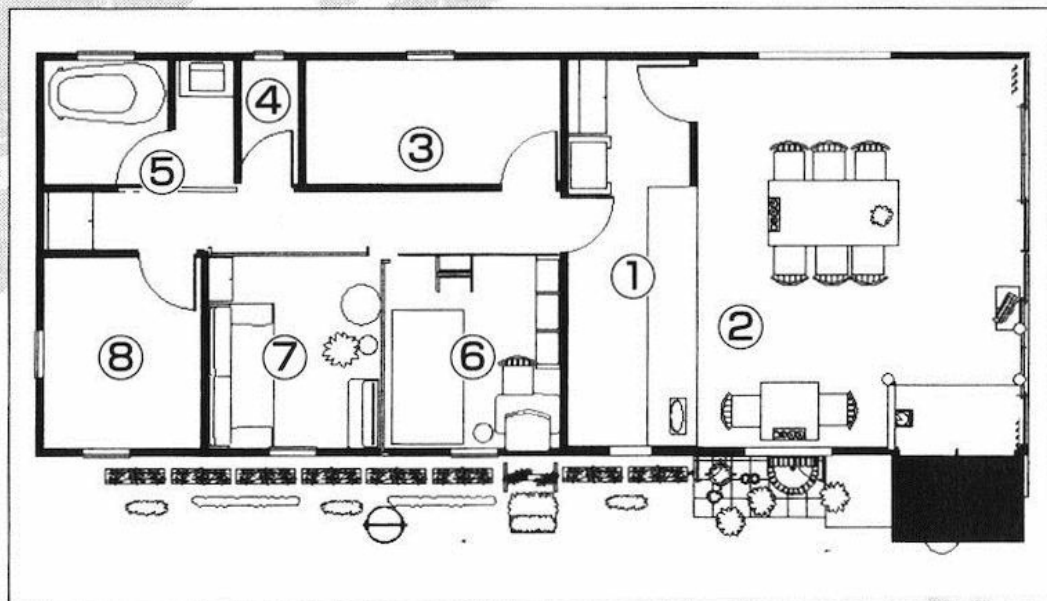
「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! うちってどうなってんだよ!? うちのこと教えて!」



「フフフうち弟。……正直、ちょっと頭が心配になる質問だけど、私が優しく教えてあげるわね? ——じゃ、事務的にいくわ。投げ槍カモン!!」



「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! 何か姉ちゃん、エンジン掛かってね!？」



①キッチン

②軽食屋店舗

③親の寝室

④トイレ

⑤風呂と洗面所

⑥トーリの部屋

⑦喜美の部屋

⑧空き部屋



「店舗と住居の一体型で、店舗部の構造はBLUE THUNDERを左右反転したのに似てるわね。特徴あるのは愚弟と私の部屋で、もともとリビングだった部分をカーテンでT字に仕切ってるのね」



「御陰でエロゲを音出してプレイ出来ねえからヘッドホン環境必須でなあ……」



「別に音出してても構わないわよ? 聞こえてきた台詞を大声で復唱したりするけど」



「姉ちゃん、俺、エロゲに真剣なんだけど……」



「でも最近は浅間とウルキアガに毒味させてるから中古じゃない。そうじゃない。ククク」



「酷ーい! ここに酷い人がいまーす!! いまーす!!」

Study:

Main Blue Thunder (Aoi Family Home)

Toori: Sis! Sis! What's our home like!? Tell me about our home!

Kimi: Heh heh heh. Home brother, that question honestly makes me worried about your brain, but I'll be nice and tell you. Okay, let's do this all businesslike! Bring on the carelessness!!

Toori: Sis! Sis! You're all fired up, aren't you!?

1: Kitchen

2: Café

3: Parent's Room

4: Bathroom

5: Bath and Washroom

6: Toori's Room

7: Kimi's Room

8: Empty Room

Kimi: The café and living space are all one structure and the café part looks a lot like a mirror image of the Tama Blue Thunder. One point of note is how my foolish brother's room and my room were originally a living room, so they're only divided off by curtains placed in a T-shape.

Toori: And that means I have to use headphones when playing porn games with the sound on...

Kimi: I don't mind if you use the speakers. Although any dialogue I hear I'll shout back at you at the top of my lungs.

Toori: Sis, I take porn games seriously, you know?

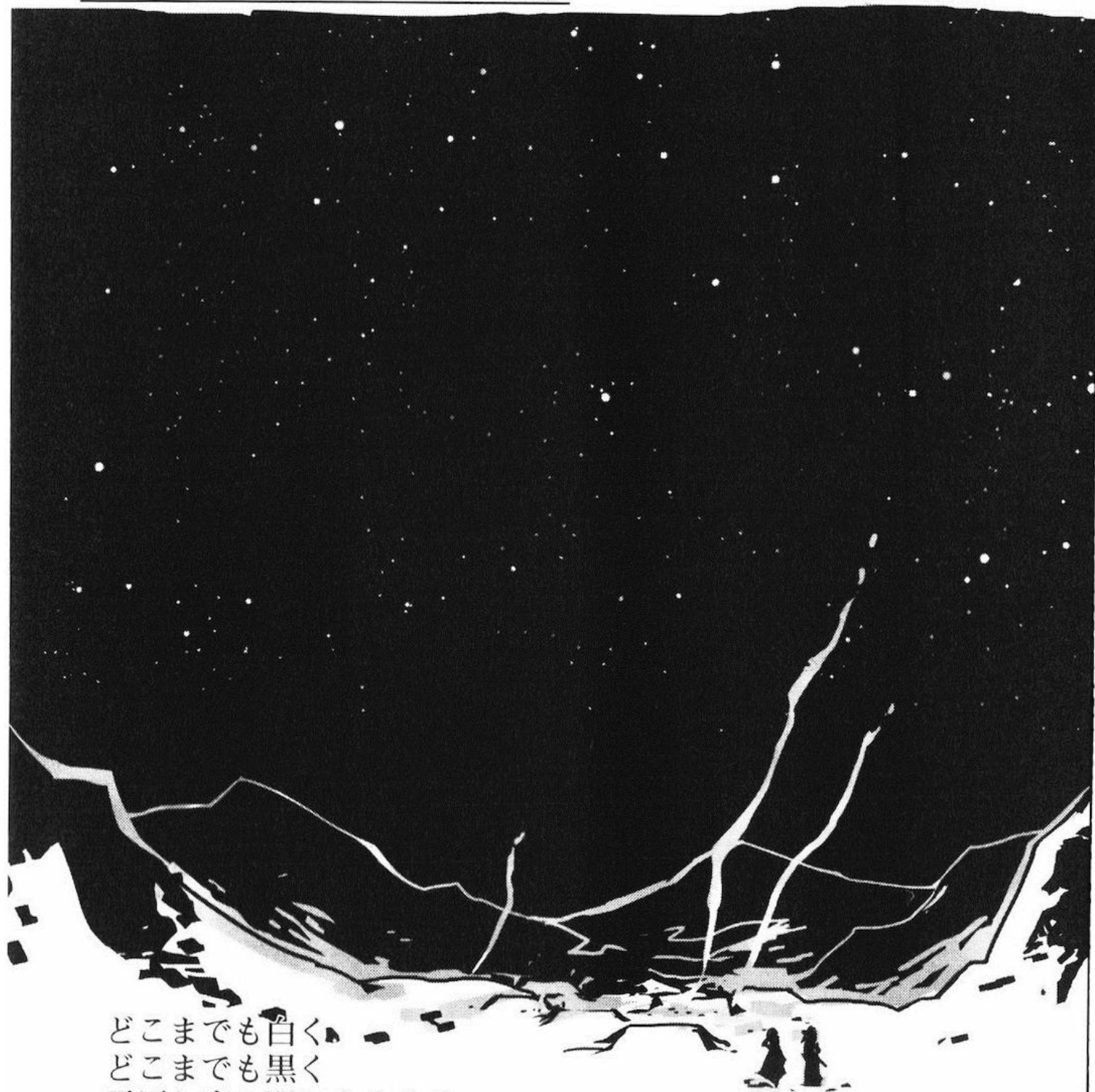
Kimi: But with Asama and Urquiaga testing them all first, you're only playing used games. Isn't that riiiiight? Heh heh heh.

Toori: That's mean! Everyone!! There's a mean person over here!!

Chapter 8: Natives of the White Plain

第八章

『白き野の生え抜き達』



どこまでも白く
どこまでも黒く
平原と空の間にあるもの
配点（雰囲気）

What is forever white

Forever black

And exists between the plain and the sky

Point Allocation (Atmosphere)

A white surface existed below the night.

It was a snowy plain. The snow reflected the moonlight and most of it was melting and refreezing.

“It’s early summer, but we have to fight in a frigid Harmonic Territory? Musashi’s having a vacation by the Pacific and we’re stuck here in Sviet Rus. ... Isn’t being a student tough, Toshi?”

“Why would you want to go to the beach when you can’t even swim, Na-chan? Besides, last year you insisted you preferred the mountains to the beach. That’s why Shibata brought you here.”

“I think you mean dragged me here! My attendance is bad enough already and that newlywed moron had to stop by my classroom with that fake smile saying, ‘Naru-Naru-kuuun? You can take a bit of time off, right? So get going, idiot.’ ”

The dark-skinned boy wearing a black leather coat turned to the boy in a red M.H.R.R. uniform standing next to him. They both had a white “4” on their clothing and the red one was a ghost with vanishing feet.

“Your Shibata impression really isn’t that good, Na-chan.”

A small ghost girl nodded in agreement on his shoulder.

“It sucks.”

“Shut up. I’m no good at reporting on the battlefield progress either.”

“I know. When you reported on how we broke through the mountain pass the other day, all you said was, ‘I charged in like this, used Lily Flower, and – kaboom – the end.’ How are we supposed to draw up a diagram based on that? You’re lucky I was there to help explain, so you can treat me to something at the cafeteria sometime. Anything but curry.”

“No curry? Not even tandoori?”

“I can’t let my guard down, so I’m banning all curry at least until the Warring States period ends.”

“Then we’ll have to end it sooner rather than later.”

“No, later works for me. We’ll be traveling around the north for a while anyway.”

The boy in the red uniform smiled bitterly, the girl on his shoulder gave a deep nod, and someone stepped up behind them.

“Oh, there you are, Maeda, Matsu, and Sassa.”

Maeda Toshiie turned around to see someone in a girl’s uniform and glasses.

She wore a large boy’s coat over a P.A. Oda girl’s uniform and she held up an *insha kotob*, but Toshiie looked to the few trails of white cooking smoke coming from the black P.A. Oda ironclad ships behind her.

“Michi, you don’t seem too worried, but should we really be doing that?”



“Not worried.”

The girl nodded at Matsu’s comment from his shoulder and sighed while lifting up the armband saying “Hokuriku Region Treasurer – Fuwa Mitsuharu” that had slipped down.

“Shibata said doing this from time to time would let them know how big our army is.”

“I see,” said Toshiie.

...He hasn’t changed.

Their upperclassman, P.A. Oda Vice Chancellor Shibata, had great skill and a large group of warriors at his disposal, but he still did not get careless. And he tended to focus in a certain direction.

“Keh. So he’s just showing off.”

“How about you focus on whether it puts any pressure on the enemy instead of whether he’s showing off?”

Fuwa took a breath while ignoring Narimasa’s groan at her words. She then looked to the distant cooking smoke and the deer drawn from the surrounding forests by the scent.

“This method does seem a lot like something he would do.”

“Yes, he does like festivals.”

“Do wars count as festivals now, Toshi?”

“Shaja. You can view them as a festival used to decide political matters. ...And that’s what makes them so troublesome.”

Toshiie followed up on those words in his heart.

...But I wonder.

He gave an inward sigh.

...How long will this festival last?

Just as he wondered that, Fuwa stepped forward. She first looked to the black ships lined up like a mountain range far behind her and then she turned around

to look at the white mountains far to the north.

“Sviet Rus’s harmonic territories sure are cold.”

“You make it sound like you haven’t been outside until now. Have you been holed up working on some additional skills?”

“Yeah, this is my first time outside. Ever since I got here, I’ve been calculating out the events of the Hokuriku region all the way up to several steps ahead. But I just saw you two out the window, so I decided to step outside.”

“You work too hard.”

“No, you do, Matsu. I haven’t even gone to the front lines.”

Fuwa let out a long, white breath.

“It really is cold.”

“Hey.”

Toshiie saw Fuwa point to the white mountain range to the north.

“Sassa, something’s moving over there.”

“What? Oh, that’s not something for the office-working, indoorsy, treasurer who nearly failed PE to worry about.”

“Did the local treasurer really just get lectured by someone who nearly failed math, modern Far Eastern, and music? ...Oh, but you aced art, didn’t you?”

“Yeah... Na-chan has some surprising redeeming features, so it’s hard to know what to do about him.”

Toshiie turned toward Fuwa while ignoring the sunglasses glaring at him to ask what he meant by that. He then glanced northward just like her.

“Now that I’m here, I need to be a little useful.”

His head was filled with the battlefield knowledge he had gathered before coming here, so he matched the topographical map, territorial map, and road map to the surrounding terrain.

“I doubt Sviet Rus would take any meaningful actions where we could see

them. But then there's that."

A giant cloud floated high in the sky to the north-northwest. The cloud seemed to be wrapped thickly around something there, but at the top...

"You can see that destroyed city, can't you? It's still a dozen kilometers away, but it has quite the presence. That western Sviet Rus city is Russia's oldest city, Novgorod."

"Oh, great. This idiot's started talking again."

"Hooray!"

...Nice one, Ma-chan!

Toshiie and Matsu clenched their right fists and Toshiie looked up toward Novgorod in the distance.

"In accordance with the Testament descriptions, that trade city was purged eight years ago. Do you know how great a purge it was? ...Out of a population of eighty thousand, sixty thousand were killed."

"What's the point if you're going to answer it yourself? ...But that's more than died at Magdeburg, right?"

"Shaja. That massacre was ordered by Sviet Rus Chancellor Ivan IV aka Ivan the Terrible. He had also inherited the name of Uesugi Kenshin, but he used that incident to split up the Siege of Otate, a conflict over inheritance, and to inherit the name of the clan's next ruler, Uesugi Kagekatsu. He purged Novgorod's female mayor Marfa and the city's dead residents as his rival Uesugi Kagekatsu and Kagekatsu's followers. That was how he reported it to the Testament Union."

"What an awful thing to do... But it shows that Ivan the Terrible was looking to the future."

Fuwa had a good point.

"That's right. ...Qing-Takeda's Takeda clan fell incredibly quickly, but when that was going on, Lord Uesugi Kenshin should have died, creating a civil war known as the Siege of Otate. But Ivan the Terrible recreated half of that in advance and made an immediate switch after Qing-Takeda's fall. He had the old Uesugi Four Heavenly Kings step down and made 'Man of Love' Naoe Kanetsugu the new

Vice Chancellor and Vice President. Honjou Shigenaga who had been moving from battlefield to battlefield was made 2nd Special Duty Officer and everything was shifted to a state that is clearly preparing for Sekigahara and beyond. And they fortified their western defenses while we were finishing Magdeburg and making our way here. But...”

Novgorod was slowly approaching them in the night sky. The dark wrapped clouds carried a slow but deep rumble.

“Mayor Marfa is a difficult person. She herself arranged for the purge eight years ago and had all of the city’s people commit suicide to become Living Dead. The city may look like ruins now, but the trading areas on the outer edges are still functioning and the city still acts as the western entrance to Russia.”

“I wonder if she’s lonely.”

“Who knows. But after negotiating with her by letter, Hashiba said she was sure to protect Novgorod.”

“Hashiba did? She has to get involved in everything, doesn’t she? I swear she’s gonna overwork herself so much she disappears one day.”

Toshiie answered Narimasa’s question with a bitter smile and a “shaja”.

“From what I’ve heard, the floating city of Novgorod had its foundation built in the prehistoric age. In other words, the Age of Dawn. The center has been protected by each historical manager of the city and apparently not even Marfa has opened it up.”

“You sure that isn’t all made up to make themselves sound more impressive? And even if they did open it, I doubt they’d find much. Besides, there are plenty of floating lands these days with IZUMO and England. Oh, and in Aki too.”

“True. But Novgorod is Russia’s oldest city and it apparently already looked like that inside the Harmonic World. We also have a good guess where it came from, but that answer might be a bad one.”

“What answer is that?”

“Let’s just say it’s a resistant part of the Far East. And it doesn’t matter much to us in modern times. It’s only worth knowing because it’s still sided with Sviet

Rus after being purged by them and being made an enemy by Uesugi over their inheritance issues.”

Toshiie then heard a sound behind him.

A few of Shibata’s transport ships were ascending and turning to the southeast.

“To Kantou?”

As Toshiie watched the transport ships, he realized Fuwa was looking in the same direction.

Next to him, she pushed up her glasses and spoke.

“They’re going to support Takigawa who’s managing Houjou. And I mean the one from the Edo region. This is going to be a troublesome time for Takigawa.”

“Keh. Let’s see her overcome this with that personality of hers. ...But Edo, huh? If that’s where she is, can’t she get help from there? I mean, you know what’s there to deal with Oushuu, right?”

“That’s getting into Hashiba’s territory, Na-chan. And you know how depressed Hashiba was about two weeks ago, right?”

Narimasa glared at him for just a moment, but...

“Sorry.”

“Say that to Hashiba, not me. She was bothered by what you said.”

“She takes on too much responsibility.”

Narimasa spat out another “keh”, but Fuwa and Matsu both smiled.

“She’s such a cute underclassman. For now, at least.”

“I sometimes don’t get her,” said Narimasa. “It’s the same for the rest of you, right? At the very least, she corners herself to some ridiculous level like she’s trying to crush herself. She’s says it’s for us, so I want to tell her to stop because that’s just creepy.”

“Someone who would stop because they were told to would never be left with

the Five Great Peaks and the Six Heavenly Demon Army. Personally, if I have no real regrets when Hashiba's end comes..."

When he noticed Fuwa and Narimasa's gazes, Toshiie trailed off and Matsu patted his cheek.

"It's okay."

He was not sure which way she meant that, but he decided it did not matter as long as it was okay.

So he said "that's right" to Matsu and saw Fuwa smile.

Then Fuwa seemed to remember something.

"Oh, come to think of it..."

She held up the *insha kotob* she had brought with her.

"We've received word from the observation team. The Date clan has started taking action concerning Musashi. Apparently, one of their higher level people went alone for a meeting with Musashi."

"Keh. That means we have to pick up the pace too."

Toshiie thought a bit about what Narimasa said.

.../ see.

"That would explain why we were told to take on an important guest on our way here from M.H.R.R."

"A guest? Who?"

"Lady Oichi. She brought a refrigerated container filled with three years' worth of boxed meals for Shibata. Sassa, she came to greet us earlier. Were you asleep?"

"Shut up. That's exactly what I was doing, you idiot. Anyway, are you serious? Lady Oichi's here? On the front line?"

The look on Narimasa's face changed when Fuwa nodded. His eyebrows rose and he turned to look at the black ships stopped to the south.

"I doubt she'll actually make an appearance, though. This should be

interesting. Is Shibata gonna be giving this his all?"

"This is probably going to be a fierce battle regardless," began Toshiie. "After all, Sviet Rus's Uesugi clan is made up of demons that have no trouble with this frigid land. Normal weapons aren't enough to get through their armor, and yet..."

He faced the northern snowy plain as he spoke.

"This is what we find as soon as we arrive."

A gentle breeze flew across the snowy plain, but it was more than a mere wind.

"Personal stealth spells using a partial spatial transition."

A group of moonlit shadows spilled from the gently wrapping movement of the air. This was the enemy. Sviet Rus's demon warriors suddenly dropped from the air and onto the snowy plain.

The enemy group continued to grow. Fuwa watched as their numbers exceeded one hundred, two hundred, and finally a thousand.

"Eh? W-wait? Three thousand...four thousand...ehhh? There's still more!?"

It was an unexpected development, but Fuwa gasped when she realized it was very real.

...An attack by thousands of enemies!?

She decided to raise her voice to contact the main unit behind them, but the scene before her eyes was too intimidating.

They were coming.

The appearing shadows slowly moved forward as if peeling back or casting off the wind. They were all over two meters tall and many of them had more than four limbs.

They were demons.

Normally, an office worker like her would never have directly faced anything like this, but now thousands of them had appeared only about one hundred meters away and their numbers were continuing to grow.

Each and every one of them wore a Sviet Rus uniform.

Toshiie and Sassa stood in front of her and they were the ones to explain exactly who this enemy was. Toshiie was counting their numbers on his fingers as he did so.

“This is the Ikkou-Ikki, a group given territory in a southern buffer region in Sviet Rus. They were originally desert demons that served Mlasi Chancellor Suleiman, but now the Orthodox Church accepts them as an indigenous faith.”

“Why couldn’t it have been the main Uesugi forces? This is a pain-in-the-ass enemy for me.”

“Pain in the ass,” agreed Matsu.

Fuwa could not even nod in agreement. Even her legs refused to move now that she had suddenly found herself on the front line.

...Wow.

The information on the enemy that she had gathered as the local treasurer appeared in her mind.

...Um, in the international standardized testing the Testament Union holds every year...

The average speed for the hundred meters among students from Kasuga Gora Kremlin, Sviet Rus’s primary academy, was around five seconds without spell assistance. That came out to about seventy kph. With demons that weighed more than three hundred kilograms, that speed alone was enough to break through a formation of human warriors.

...Meanwhile, I weigh fifty-two kilograms and my hundred meter time was – sorry – twenty-one seconds. That’s slow.

But she used her skill as treasurer to calculate out what was about to happen.

...If I make a mad dash from here to the main unit...

“Now, then.”

...In how many seconds will Fuwa turn around, in how many second will she start running, in how many second will they catch up to her, in how many

second will they trample her, in how many second will they do all sorts of awful things to her, in how many second will she make a double nirvana sign, and in how many seconds will the footage be spread all over the divine network? (Point Allocation: Making things more exciting) “Hey, Fuwa, why are you wiggling around with your hands on your cheeks? Is your brain working fruitlessly again, you idiot?”

“I-if you call someone an idiot, it means you’re an idiot! More importantly, what are we going to do about this!?”

“Oh, right.” Toshiie sounded entirely calm. “Michi, could you stay right where you are?”

“Eh?”

Fuwa tilted her head at Toshiie’s request.

...How am I supposed to stay right where I am with this going on?

But Toshiie was not paying attention to her. He was looking down at the fingers he was using to count the enemy.

“Yeah, I don’t want anything messing up my calculations. ...Oh, you can charge right on in, Na-chan. You’re not in my calculations, but you can dodge anything that almost hits you, right?”

“You’re coming up with some random strategy again, aren’t you?”

Sassa glared at Toshiie and Fuwa asked a question.

“Strategy?”

“Shaja. We knew something had been detected on this snowy field...thanks to Shibata. And since we’ve joined all of you for the first time in a while, Shibata told us to ‘use these small fries to show off to our men how hard we’re working’. In other words, he left us in charge of intercepting the enemy. Although I have to admit I didn’t expect for Shibata to lure in the enemy with cooking smoke.”

“Um, then, I...”

“Shaja.” Sassa shifted his glare from Toshiie to Fuwa. “That’s why Toshi

commented on how you didn't seem too worried when you showed up. Did Shibata not tell you anything?"

"Think about it, Na-chan. Normally, the local treasurer would never go outside."

"B-but I saw you two for the first time in forever..."

"Reunion," added Matsu.

"That's right." Fuwa nodded with the small ghost girl and felt some tension leave her. "But Maeda...you promise I'll be okay here, right?"

"Ha ha ha. Have you forgotten who competed with you for the main treasurer position?"

"No, I haven't."

"God, you two are annoying."

With a bitter smile on his face, Narimasa took a step forward and rolled up his coat's sleeves.

"Let's do this."

At that moment, the snowy field exploded in front of them.

The demons had suddenly started dashing toward them.

An excellent decision, thought Toshiie.

As the entire front row of demons began a dash, their feet kicked up the snow and created a reverse cascade of snow in front of the row behind them.

"They'll probably be attacking and taking detours behind that wall. But..."

Toshiie turned his smile toward the approaching front line as well as the gunfire and charging demons following from behind.

"This is the night, parade of the living. It is time you learned the realm to which you belong."

Something burst up from below and destroyed the wall of snow the enemy was kicking up.

It was a crowd.

This crowd of the dead crawled up from the earth with massive numbers.

“I guess I’ll go with fifty thousand for now.”

When he dropped money, the dead appeared. Human bones had been distorted and combined to form the army of dead bones that all held weapons.

“———!!”

The charging enemy was powerful enough to smash them to pieces, but the bones still advanced in great numbers.

They collided and were swallowed up. Toshiie opened his smiling mouth as he watched the destruction and approaching wave.

“Okay, Na-chan, head on out. I’ll be back here.”

“You don’t mind if I break those, right?”

“If you break them in groups of ten, they can transform to the next level, so I would actually appreciate it.”

“Now I’m stuck doing odd jobs?” complained Sassa as he began running.

By the time a pillar of snow had been kicked up next to Toshiie, Sassa had already torn through three demons with his leaping attack.

“Sassa’s as crazy as ever.”

“Yes, but I’ve recently learned that we’re actually relatively calm as things go. So I need to push myself to the forefront some more.”

Matsu nodded on his shoulder and he dropped some silver coins from the hilt of the coin roll sword at his waist.

“So...” Toshiie took a step forward while giving the charging enemy a fearless smile. “For now, I think I’ll add some more. I need to do my best here.”

After all...

“Musashi is starting to act again. And this time, with the Date clan.”

“The clash in Hokuriku between Sviet Rus and P.A. Oda has begun?”

Masazumi spoke to Mitotsudaira inside a largescale lift along the Ariake's inner wall. The torii-style lift was only carrying Naomasa, who was operating it, and the rest of the chancellor's officers and student council, so she did not need to worry about what she said.

"We're just about to meet Date's Vice Chancellor up top, so this is sudden. ... Where did this information come from?"

"The M.H.R.R. Protestants."

That must mean it traveled through Hexagone Française and IZUMO, decided Masazumi. Information from Kantou IZUMO would first reach Mitotsudaira, the Mito ruler and one of the Special Duty Officers. Mitotsudaira would tell Tenzou and then it would reach everyone, but...

"Given the situation, the 1st Special Duty Officer will wait until you give the go-ahead to tell everyone."

"Judge. I need to thank Hexagone Française's Vice Chancellor for the information."

"A-all my mother did was relay it."

Still Got It: "Oh, dear. Nate, are you at the age where your mother's kindness embarrasses you? Heh heh. I'll have to contact a nice restaurant over there and have them send you some red meat as a standin for red rice."

"Why can you send us divine transmissions!? And you were spying on us, weren't you!?"

Still Got It: "Oh, my. Spying? Who would ever do that? Your father and I can only hear what you say."

"I-I can't believe this! These divine transmission settings are just plain awful!!"

Well, Mito is where her inherited name comes from and it has some connection to Hexagone Française, rationalized Masazumi.

Masazumi moved next to Mitotsudaira who opened a sign frame and accessed the settings page.

Vice President: "Anyway, I appreciate the relayed information, Hexagone Française Vice Chancellor. Pass my thanks on to IZUMO's Chairman and

M.H.R.R.'s Secretary."

Still Got It: "Oh, dear. I only passed on some local rumors to my daughter, so I don't recall doing anything worth your thanks."

Vice President: "Then I would like to have our treasurer send you something as thanks for the red meat you are sending Mitotsudaira. How about a refrigerated container you can use as a Mouri-side interpretation? Cooling techniques have come a long way recently, so you should be able to store some excellent meat."

Still Got It: "Testament. But with a large container, I'll need to think of a place to put it."

Silver Wolf: "Um, mother? You're planning to use it at home?"

Still Got It: "Yes, it is being sent as thanks for your 'red rice', after all. ...Now, Nate, I'm sure you are going to take part in the coming meeting, but don't do anything careless, okay? I have a busy night planned using your father, but you need to work hard so you too can grow up into a wonderful adult with a busy life."

Masazumi wanted to ask what the woman meant by "a busy night" and "using your father", but she decided against it when she saw Mitotsudaira's shoulders drooping and her head hanging at nearly ninety degrees.

Naomasa turned around while operating the lift's torii-style information terminal.

"We're about to reach the top. It's cold up there, so..."

She pointed to her neck hard point. Mitotsudaira began operating a sign frame containing her divine protection settings and Masazumi's anteater Mouse did so on its own from her shoulder.

"Maa."

A warmth reached the back of her waist like someone had placed their hand there.

"I see you've gotten used to that," commented Naomasa.

"That's because I've had to deal with too much already. For now, I'll add in one

of the defense spells Asama gave me.”

“Judge. That should be enough for here. ...I’ll be waiting down below, so call me if something happens. I’ll make sure the Suzaku is ready to go.”

“Judge. Please do. Especially since it’s Date’s Vice Chancellor instead of Vice President. ...Although it’s because she’s as cautious as we are that we’re holding the meeting on the Ariake’s roof.”

...In fact, that’s probably why they sent their Vice Chancellor.

Even if something did happen, a Vice Chancellor had the authority to make decisions for their nation and had good odds of making it back alive.

“...Date Narumi, hm?

Masazumi knew Date Clan Vice Chancellor Date Narumi as the military leader of the Date clan. The historical figure had been the younger male cousin of Masamune, head of the Date clan, but a girl filled the role in the history recreation.

...If I’m remembering right, Date has a lot of blood relationships which makes things more difficult.

She did not want to get involved in another clan’s business, but some of that could not be avoided when it came to the Testament descriptions. They had already interfered with Mary and Elizabeth in England and Mitotsudaira’s presence on the Far Eastern side was enough to create a connection with Hexagone Française. But...

Still Got It: “Oh, I forgot to tell you one thing.”

Vice President: “What is it, Reine des Garous?”

Still Got It: “Testament. Since you called me that, I’ll tell you. ...It’s about the Date clan. Do you know what happens to them in their conflict over inheritance?”

“Judge,” replied Masazumi as this had come up at their previous meeting.

Vice President: “The conflict occurred between Masamune and his brother

Kojirou. They had lived as brothers, but Masamune killed Kojirou because their mother decided Kojirou would be a better head of the clan.”

But...

Vice President: “I believe that history recreation had yet to be carried out.”

Still Got It: “But they would have been forced to advance their history...thanks to a certain nation losing a certain battle.”

Silver Wolf: “Mother!”

Masazumi gestured to Mitotsudaira, telling her not to worry about it.

...Based on the way she's saying this, I doubt the Reine des Garous has any real proof either.

That was why she had lured them in to continue the conversation for her. That way, she avoided saying anything careless. *In that case,* decided Masazumi.

Vice President: “Thank you for the warning, Reine des Garous. ...You're saying recent events have already caused the people of Oushuu to lose what they had been hoping for from us, aren't you?”

They were not accepted as a source of peace or as a barrier against P.A. Oda. All they had were the promises of the Testament descriptions and...

“Now, then.”

A giant ship was being remodeled inside the Ariake down below.

...That is everything we have.

Vice President: “Reine des Garous, it's about time for us. We can celebrate together afterwards.”

She looked up just in time to see Naomasa stopping the lift. Their speed gently dropped and the ceiling hatch began to open overhead.

The white ceiling split apart and the dimly-lit canopy of the stealth space came into view.

The wind blew in, but it did not feel cold.

Masazumi refocused her mind as she felt the gentle shaking of the lift

resuming its ascent.

...We're beginning again.

This was an unofficial meeting with the Date clan, but at the same time...

“Let's take the first step of a small but definite new beginning.”



伊達・成実

Date Narumi waited on the armor of the Ariake's upper surface.

Her false arms were lowered at her sides and her feet were planted at shoulder-width with the right one shifted a bit forward. This stance allowed her to move at a moment's notice while she also analyzed the information reaching her through her mechanical legs.

...The shaking of the lift has stopped.

The lift hatch was about to open.

She felt a vibration with a set frequency produced by the stopping lift and the distortion in the vibration told her eight people were onboard. There were four girls and four boys...no, one was a girl with a false arm. Most likely, Musashi's 6th Special Duty Officer.

She read the Ariake's internal structure in the same way and discovered the top was divided into four sections and the bottom was divided into eight. Of the backyards used to hold supplies, there were sixteen large ones and one hundred twenty eight small ones.

The remodeling activity was light on the front and heavy on the middle.

...Most likely, the first port and starboard ships have so little remodeling activity because they were already completed.

They had remodeled those two ships which acted as transport ships so warehouses for materials and lodgings for workers could be built. They were likely focusing their work on individual ships instead of working on everything at once. In that case...

"Perhaps the Musashi is getting more than armor. Perhaps each ship is getting something unique."

Narumi spoke under her breath and suddenly noticed the gazes of the Far East Guard Unit surrounding her at a distance as her "escort".

"Oops."

A smile had reached the corner of her mouth without her realizing it.

I'm hopeless, she thought with a self-deprecating smile before facing forward.

Someone stood about thirty meters ahead. Their Far Eastern uniform was a mixture of a boy's and girl's summer uniform.

"I am Musashi Ariadust Academy Student Council Vice President Honda Masazumi."

"Testament. I am Oushuu Sibir Sendai Date Academy Vice Chancellor Date Narumi."

Now, then, thought Narumi. I wish Vice President Katakura hadn't given me so much to do.

But there was one thing she had to do for sure.

...Position Date favorably for the future.

To do that, she moved her lightly lipsticked lips.

"It may be unofficial, but let us begin this meeting between Date and Matsudaira."

Masazumi had Mitotsudaira stand to her right. The other girl got down on one knee, placed her silver chain obelisk case on the floor, and faced forward with shallow strength in her eyebrows.

Date Narumi was about twenty meters away, and...

Asama: "Oh, I'll set up a soundproofing barrier."

All sound immediately vanished from their surroundings.

Asama: "Um, do you not want anyone reading lips? I could cover your mouths with a god mosaic, god gaze, god steam, or god frosted glass plus voice alterations."

Silver Wolf: "Why are there so many options?"

Scarred: "Judge. But there is generally no need to hide anything. ...Isn't that right, Master Tenzou?"

<**The Divine Network has stalled due to congestion from a sudden surge of posts.**> *...This is not a good start for the meeting. And doesn't that mean everyone can see this?*

While wondering that, Masazumi instructed Tsukinowa to record the minutes of the meeting. She then faced forward where Narumi stood in the same stance as before.

“Sorry about leaving you with nothing to do.”

“No, I can gain quite a bit of information just by standing here. But...” Narumi tilted her head. “Where is your president?”

“He’s a lost cause.”

Narumi frowned at her immediate response and finally asked another question.

“What about your chancellor?”

“He’s a lost cause too.”

In fact they’re one and the same for us. In other words, he’s a double lost cause.

Masazumi nodded in her heart but then came to a sudden realization.

...Eh? Double? Isn’t that actually pretty bad?

Vice President: “Hey! Everyone! I know this is late, but I just realized we have a pretty big weakness!”

Me: “Eh!? What is it? Is it something bad!? I’m busy fixing the position of my crotch supporter, so can it wait until later?”

Vice President: “It’s you!!”

She saw sign frames from the others telling her to calm down and she saw Narumi tilting her head beyond the transparent panels.

“Your president and chancellor are a lost cause?”

Oh, no. There’s been a misunderstanding. The Far East is used to hopeless presidents and chancellors, but they tend to be useful in other nations. Although now that I think about it, I don’t think I’ve met very many that were.

But...

Vice President: “Oh, I get it. That means Date’s chancellor’s officers and

student council are actually useful.”

Gold Mar: “Aren’t we a lost cause as a whole if that news is enough to excite us?”

10ZO: “And you mustn’t show off our weaknesses, Masazumi-dono!!”

I suppose not, she thought while checking some things on her sign frame and facing Narumi again.

“Sorry, there seems to have been a misunderstanding.”

Masazumi chose her words carefully.

“It isn’t that our president and chancellor are a lost cause. What I meant is...”

A sign frame arrived showing the smiling idiot in a Tres Españan girl’s summer uniform.

...I’m going to kill him!

As Masazumi grew expressionlessly angry, Narumi nodded to urge her on, so she reworded her previous statement.

“He never had a cause to lose in the first place.”

She ignored the others as they shouted at her.

...Don’t blame me. Everyone has their limit.

At any rate, Date President and Chancellor Masamune was apparently a proper leader. And in that case, things would probably go well if Masazumi did a proper job of negotiating.

That meant she needed to focus on handling this meeting with Narumi in order to draw out Masamune.

...Our goal is to build a relationship with Date that has a future!

After confirming what she needed to do, Masazumi spoke.

“Now, I would like to ask what you wish to accomplish in this meeting.”

“Testament. Very well. To sum it up...”

Narumi spoke with a smile.

“The Date clan wishes to cut all ties with Matsudaira. Is that okay?”

Chapter 9: Confused Girl on the Rooftop

第九章

『天井上の戸惑い娘』



突然と
いきなりの違いは
配点（彼我）

What causes

Sudden and unforeseen differences?

Point Allocation (You and Them)

Masazumi silently repeated the first thing Date Narumi had said.

...The Date clan wishes to cut all ties with Matsudaira. Is that okay?

That meant they would be ending any kind of relationship, but there was more. That was only the beginning and the explanation followed.

“In other words...Matsudaira would be harmful to Date, so we would like to cut all ties.”

The idea of cutting off any kind of connection between the two clans brought a chill to Masazumi’s heart.

This isn’t good, she thought.

She had never expected this to immediately begin with an absolute severing of ties, but now that she thought about it, sending only their Vice Chancellor may have hinted at that.

What was she supposed to do?

Marube-ya: “Ah! Masazumi! You’re an amateur, so don’t try prostrating! It’s dangerous!”

Those crazy people really do think differently, she thought as something else happened.

“I suppose that concludes our talk,” said Narumi as she gently spread her arms. “Unturning Centipede!”

After a sharp shout, a giant form arrived behind her. It was over three meters tall and it opened like a flower.

...Is that her personal mobile shell!?

The blossoming mobile shell took the same spread-armed stance as her, so she only needed to take a step back and wait for it to close.

Bell: “Eh? Wh-what’s happening?”

10ZO: “Negotiations have broken down! They set up the meeting and now they’ve ended it. And that means they’ve cut their ties with the Matsudaira clan!”

It was a simple but effective method. Because this was unofficial, they could dodge the issue if another nation asked them what had actually happened.

Righteousness: “And this means Musashi will have to negotiate toward restoring their relationship with the Date clan!”

...That’s right!

They handled this well, thought Masazumi as she held a hand against the wind caused by the mobile shell’s summoning.

If Narumi escaped here, anytime they faced the Date clan, they would be forced to negotiate toward that restoration first and foremost. Even if it was the other side that had cut off all ties, the fact remained that they were no longer on amicable terms. So...

Smoking Girl: “Just to check, do you want me to stop her with Jizuri Suzaku?”

Vice President: “No, you can’t do that. A clash like that would create an actual conflict to prove all ties had been cut.”

Just as Asama said “in that case” in her own divine transmission, Narumi took her step back into Unturning Centipede. Her false legs produced a sound of mechanical movement and her long black hair swayed freely.

She was leaving.

While taking the action, she gave Masazumi a smile with the ends of her eyebrows somewhat lowered.

She was definitely smiling and then she opened her mouth.

“Farewell, Musashi. ...You’re going to have to deal with Oushuu using Oushuu’s rules.”

With those words, Unturning Centipede began to envelop her, but...

“Wait!!”

A voice that was nearly a roar burst from the lift behind the Musashi group.

Masazumi recognized who it was without having to turn around, so she called his name.

“2nd Special Duty Officer Kiyonari Urquiaga! You handle this!”

Narumi hesitated.

A half-dragon appeared thirty meters ahead of her.

She judged him to be two meters and fifty-three centimeters tall as he flew from the gap between the lift and floor. As a rare aerial type of half-dragon, he was capable of high-speed flight and aerial combat if necessary. Even in a ground battle, a high-speed dash and collision from his great body would undoubtedly be dangerous.

He had come to a quick landing after flying out, but he could surely take flight again at any time. And when looking at their comparative initial speeds...

...He would be faster.

Unturning Centipede was a head taller, so he would not stand a chance against her in a direct confrontation, but...

...2nd Special Duty Officer!

This is dangerous, she thought.

After all, the 2nd Special Duty Officer of the Chancellor’s Officers was generally in charge of administering justice. That half-dragon would be able to determine whether her announcement of cut ties was in line with international law.

What would happen if they clashed and she crushed him?

“ ... ”

Should I go? she hesitantly wondered.

I should, she decided. *But it definitely could cause some later trouble.*

Of course, she had techniques of dealing with that. She had techniques that would not injure her opponent or herself.

...But...

As she thought, she placed one false leg inside the leg portion of the mobile shell. If she pressed down her heel, she would instruct the shell to close.

She decided to do so and rely entirely on Unturning Centipede.

Unturning Centipede's sealing system could read her will, so if it fully closed, it meant she truly wished to leave and her opponent had said nothing that made her wish to stay. And if it did not, it meant she wanted to stay.

That's what I'll do, she decided as she left her decision and her body in the hands of the machine.

Unturning Centipede's legs, arms, and body were all closing. She thought of it like a book closing as the half-dragon raised his voice in the narrowing world before her.

"I have one question."

What could that be? she thought.

If a simple question could stop me, I wouldn't be the Vice Chancellor, she also thought.

If anything, shouldn't he attack me to try to force the Date clan to remain at the negotiating table? Or is he going to ask me whether I follow the proper safety procedures when operating my mobile shell?

But...

...Yes.

Even as she thought she should leave, she may have also wished to stay.

There was a reason. The Date clan was currently faced with a complicated issue that required strength. But because of that...

"It is no use."

She spoke up in order to cut away the slight feeling floating up in her heart.

She then imagined flight. Once Unturning Centipede fully closed, the flight system would activate and it would be over.

However...

“I have one question!” he said again.

...What?

What was he going to ask her? Just as she reached the divide between a desire to leave and a desire to stay, her mind focused on the half-dragon.

“Do you have a little brother or a little sister!?”

Masazumi saw Narumi’s mobile shell fall over as if its knees had given out.

...Oh, that was a nice reaction. Was that so incomprehensible that even the mobile shell fell over?

As Masazumi calmly wondered that, several sign frames appeared around the mobile shell as it began to reboot. In order to make some adjustments, the limbs and body of the shell bloomed once more, so Narumi sat up inside it with her eyebrows slightly raised.

She quickly looked to the left and right before staring at Urquiaga who now stood before her.

“Eh? Wait! What was that!?”

Vice President: “Hey, Urquiaga, try not to say anything too weird.”

Uqui: “Heh. Not to worry, Masazumi. That was a mere diversion. I will ask my real question now.”

Urquiaga spread his arms wide and spoke to Narumi.

“I am asking if you are someone’s elder sister.”

“That’s the same thing!!” shouted Masazumi.

“Ha ha ha. How are those the same? They are not at all the same, Masazumi!”

“You can’t just vehemently deny it...”

“Are you listening?”

“Unfortunately.”

She was glaring at him, but he did not see it since he had his back turned. He gathered strength in his shoulders and took a step toward Narumi.

“Listen. ...Before I asked her whether she had a little brother or a little sister. But...then she could be an elder brother. And we can’t have that, can we? Hm?”

Since Masazumi was being forced to listen to this, Mitotsudaira gave her a look that was likely of pity.

...Um, you’re being forced to listen to this too, aren’t you?

But the half-dragon took another step forward as he continued his personal argument.

“Listen,” he began again. “It would have been quite the faux pas if I assumed she was an elder sister when she was really an elder brother. To ensure that did not happen, I decided to clarify my question and ask again! Right, Mitotsudaira?”

“Um, I was only pitying Masazumi, so could you not drag me into this?”

Masazumi could not agree more, but Urquiaga had not forgotten who he was really speaking to. He once more asked his question to Narumi who had stopped moving.

“Now, answer me. ...Are you someone’s elder sister?”

He received his question immediately.”

“Hm?” she began. “No, I don’t have a younger sister or a younger brother.”

Narumi mentally held her head in her hands.

...Is this what people talk about in diplomatic discussions!?

This was not at all what she had imagined. She had assumed it would be a more mature conversation that compared the statuses and positions of their nations while laying the groundwork for their respective goals.

But she could not leave at the moment because Unturning Centipede had to reboot after that incomprehensible nonsense about being an elder sister was added into her decision to leave or not.

What am I supposed to do? she wondered.

She did not know what having a younger sibling had to do with diplomacy, but she doubted it was anything important. It was also causing trouble for Unmoving Centipede. So...

“I have no intention of taking part in any nonsensical conversations.”

If it was diplomatically unimportant, then that was true. But just in case he did have some purpose behind it, she decided to listen.

“Unfortunately, I am an only child.”

“Judge. I see.”

Masazumi saw Urquiaga drop his spread arms, lower his shoulders, hang his head, and release sighs that glowed with white ether light from all of his exhaust ports. He then turned his back on Narumi, faced Masazumi, and showed her his deeply shaded lowered head.

“There was no point in my coming here. I was only getting my hopes up over a flight of fancy. Of course, that isn’t exactly a rare occurrence.”

“I’m not entirely sure I know what you’re talking about.” Masazumi spoke to Urquiaga while wondering what was going on. “But since you flew here, I guess it really was a ‘flight’ of fancy.”

Her joke flopped.

Gold Mar: “Ah, Uqui, are you okay? You took a direct hit from that one, so are you even still alive?”

Sticky King: “Yes, he might not have made it even if he managed to shield his vitals.”

Vice President: “It isn’t going to kill him! See, he’s alive! Sorry to hear you didn’t like it!!”

As Urquiaga stood motionless with his shoulders lowered, Masazumi looked to

Narumi.

Narumi's shoulders were also a little lowered and her mouth hung partway open as she looked back to Masazumi. She seemed utterly confused, but...

"Well, if that's all."

She moved Unturning Centipede's rebooting process along and prepared to leave.

As the mobile shell began to close, Masazumi nearly said "yes".

...Wait, I can't let her leave!!

She had to do something, but it was so sudden that she was unsure what to say. Instead, she began typing on her sign frame.

Vice President: "Mitotsudaira! Help!"

Silver Wolf: "What! Do! You! Mean! By! That!?"

Me: "Eh!? C'mon, Nate, adlib! You've gotta adlib! Don't worry. Seijun just lowered the bar so far that anything you say'll be fine!!"

Silver Wolf: "Eh? B-but I still don't know what to say..."

Hori-ko: "Not to worry, Mitotsudaira-sama. Now, lower your hips and exert yourself."

Masazumi did not want to think about what was beginning over there, but Horizon joining the divine network conversations was a good thing. Probably. As for Mitotsudaira...

"F-fine then. I will handle this."

The silver-haired girl stood up with a dignified movement.

Narumi saw Mito's ruler stand up to face her.

What was she going to do? Unturning Centipede could leave at any time, but...

...If I leave now, they could say I ignored her opportunity to speak.

She could no longer continue with her original plan of saying what had to be said and immediately leaving.

Plus, this was the ruler of Mito. Narumi had expected her to act as a bodyguard, not a negotiator. After exchanging words a few times, they must have shifted from the greetings stage to the discussion stage.

How troublesome, she thought as the silver-haired girl patted the half-dragon's shoulder as he continued to hang his head. Then she faced Narumi.

"Are you listening? Look how depressed our 2nd Special Duty Officer is."

She then pointed at Narumi.

"This is your fault! I won't let you leave without paying for what you've done, so prepare yourself!"

...Ehh!?

For some reason, the terms "new" and "original" came to mind and Unturning Centipede nearly fell over again, but she could not accept what this girl was saying. After all, the 2nd Special Duty Officer was in charge of administering justice.

...Shifting the blame for his dejection onto me is nonsense.

So she shrugged and spoke with a sigh.

"Um? That couldn't possibly be my fault."

"Oh, but it is!! ...Isn't that right, Masazumi!? The 2nd Special Duty Officer's depression is the Date Vice Chancellor's fault, isn't it!?"

Vice President: "Why would you hand it back to me?!"

Silver Wolf: "An eye for an eye."

When Masazumi saw the pleasant smile on Mitotsudaira's face, she told herself: *Calm down, me. You've been faced with seemingly impossible problems countless times before.*

Yes, calm down, Honda Masazumi. This situation is truly regrettable, but you're a capable girl. Yes, you're quite capable when it comes to it. The truly important part is making sure it never "comes to it", though.

Mal-Ga: "It's hopeless... Now Date's going to be our enemy and I won't be able

to take part in the Oushuu event...”

Asama: “Wh-why are you being so pessimistic!? There’s probably a much worse fate in store for us, so let’s try to stay positive while we can!”

Almost Everyone: “I think we found the real pessimist!!”

At any rate, Masazumi tried to find a political use for what Urquiaga had said.

...How is the Date clan organized?

If Neshinbara were here, I could check with him, but oh well.

She grasped at the connection that flashed through her mind and she spoke to Narumi who was hesitating between leaving or not.

“Listen, Date Vice Chancellor.”

“Testament. What is it?”

“Judge.” Masazumi breathed in. “You seem to have misunderstood our 2nd Special Duty Officer’s words.”

“Oh, is that so? But in that case, what did he mean?”

“Judge,” repeated Masazumi as she mentally prepared herself. *This is the important part*, she told herself. “Listen. According to the Testament descriptions, Date Shigezane, whose name you have inherited, was like a stepbrother to Date Masamune, head of the Date clan. Date Shigezane was apparently a little younger, but from what we can see here, you are a girl and you are also the Vice Chancellor. So our 2nd Special Duty Officer was asking if you are in fact an ‘elder sister’ in reality rather than in the history recreation.”

Masazumi patted Urquiaga’s arm.

“I will admit he intruded on your privacy surrounding the inherited name issue, but that is what he meant and it came from his desire for us to remain on friendly terms. Please do not misinterpret him.”

Someone inside the Main Blue Thunder nodded at Masazumi’s words.

It was Gin who had moved to the central table with Muneshige after Masazumi and Mitotsudaira had left. She used her giant false arms to eat some

anmitsu in a glass container.

...I see.

She set down the container.

“Judge. That was quite forced, but it is true Date Narumi might have known Date Masamune from a young age. That interpretation is entirely possible.”

...But it would seem Musashi’s Vice President is taking a somewhat defensive stance.

In her final line, she had mentioned “his desire to remain on friendly terms” to seal off her opponent’s escape, but she had added “do not misinterpret this” to drive the point home.

...Is this Mikatagahara’s influence?

She was partially just trying to be extra careful, but it could easily be taken as coercive. As a freeloader on the Musashi, Gin was not entirely sure what to do about that, but...

“This is about the Date clan.”

Gin opened a sign frame containing the information she had researched on her own.

“Date Masamune leads as both the Chancellor and Student Council President, but she is supported on both sides by Vice Chancellor Date Narumi and Vice President Katakura Kagetsuna.”

“If she is ‘supported’ on both sides...”

“Judge.” Gin nodded at Muneshige’s prompting and slowly continued.
“Masamune is a second year.”

“That’s right. She’s the same year as me. ...Although I didn’t interact with her much even as a fellow Kantou student.”

Two people stood in front of the Main Blue Thunder and the more lightly-equipped one spoke.

She was Satomi Yoshiyasu. She had two swords at her waist and she placed her

hand on the dog face design of Murasamemaru's hilt.

She gripped that hilt that someone else had already used.

"The academy that will rule Oushuu, huh?"

She suddenly raised her eyebrows somewhat and looked to the right. Light spilled out from the Blue Thunder's windows and Musashi's vassal stood on the opposite side of the door. The vassal was dealing with one of the stray dogs that would show up from time to time, but Yoshiyasu kept her gaze flat.

"Whenever Date Academy acts, it affects the other academies in southern Oushuu and they would often invade Satomi from the north."

"Oh, on the Testament Union side of things, doesn't Satomi's northern academy correspond to the northern horse-riding tribes?"

"Lady Yoshitsune would sometimes come to harass them, so it could be trouble. Kantou is supposed to be held by Uesugi, but they seem to have had their hands full with P.A. Oda lately."

Yoshiyasu added a "but".

"Sviet Rus's Uesugi holds Hokuriku and Kantou, Mogami holds western Oushuu, and Date holds eastern Oushuu. ...The one with the largest territory is Date. They aren't a small nation like us."

Yoshiyasu opened a sign frame for the glasses vassal to see. It displayed information from her personal databank.

"This is the Date clan's lineup."

<Oushuu Sibir Sendai Date Clan – Representative List>

Chancellor: Date Masamune – Also the Student Council President. Second year. Born between the Dragon God and a human. Details unknown.

Vice President: Katakura Kagetsuna – Also the Treasurer and Secretary. Third year.

Vice Chancellor: Date Narumi – Uses the mobile shell Unturning Centipede. Third year.

1st Special Duty Officer: Rusu Masakage – Artificial personality of Sendai

Castle's management and control system.

2nd Special Duty Officer: Oniniwa Tsunamoto – Uses the god of war Sagetsu. Demonic long-lived.

“Without a Treasurer or Secretary, that’s a nice short list. They probably don’t have much trouble.”

“They are structured for centralized authority. It isn’t that they lack the personnel; Kagetsuna simply handles the legal procedures for all of the government affairs so that Masamune’s decisions can be acted on as quickly as possible. In other words, all of the personnel that would normally work under the Treasurer and Secretary are placed under the Vice President. They act on those top-down commands with no room for protest. It’s really a type of dictatorship. ...Of course, it seems Oniniwa and Rusu also act as aides.”

“So it isn’t that they only have a few skilled people. They have plenty of skilled people, but they’re tightly controlled.”

“Testament...I mean, judge. That’s right. But Miss Vassal, do you know why Date is setup this way?”

The vassal placed a hand on her lips and looked into the air.

“Umm,” she wondered. “Isn’t centralized authority used to immediately react to the constant changes in political situations or in conflicts with other nations?”

She’s clever, thought Yoshiyasu with a bitter smile.

“Sorry. You’re actually the upperclassman here. I seem to have a habit of looking down on people.”

“No, no. A vassal isn’t going to care about something like that.”

Yoshiyasu sighed at the honest smile on the girl’s face.

Then she looked back to her own sign frame.

“Uesugi is the same. And Mogami is even more centralized. There are two reasons for that. One is the heightened reaction time to changes in conflicts and politics as you mentioned. And the other...”

Yoshiyasu took a breath.

“Quite a few rulers desire more conflict or prosperity than absolutely necessary. So in order to show the world that they do not desire more than is necessary, they stop displaying the national power known as ‘personnel’. As for why...”

Yoshiyasu pointed at the Main Blue Thunder’s door behind them.

“They do not want to show any hostility during the coming age when Matsudaira has conquered the Far East.”

“You mean...?”

The vassal’s eyes widened and Yoshiyasu continued without looking away.

“Judge. ...The forces of Oushuu trusted in Matsudaira’s rule and the blessings it would bring. But based on their current actions, their trust and all else have been lost.”

So...

“While Oushuu has abandoned their trust in Matsudaira, they are essentially fumbling around blindly. However, that put them in an appropriate position for the Warring States period. That is, for an age of chaos, suspicion, and usurpation.”

“In other words, Musashi wishes to keep a friendly relationship with Date during this chaotic age?”

Even as she spoke, Narumi reminded herself that they could not join forces with Matsudaira in the current situation.

After all, they could not think of Musashi as a fighting force and they were being targeted by Hashiba that had invaded Satomi and Edo. Also...

...Date’s history recreation comes into play.

After realizing how powerful Hashiba was, the many clans and academies from Oushuu, Kantou, and Hokuuriku had focused on their history recreations.

This was no time to dream of Matsudaira’s eventual rule and the guaranteed territory they would receive then. They had to think about the influence of

Hashiba that was already here.

...Hashiba used their invasion of Satomi to demonstrate that they would use their own history recreation to its fullest.

Hashiba's two Korean invasions occurred after Nobunaga's death and in Hashiba's last years, yet they had carried that out in a time before Nobunaga's identity had been revealed.

"Hashiba is saying they can ignore the order of their own history. They destroyed the historical connections but used the pieces to acquire K.P.A. Italia, the head of the Testament Union."

As she spoke, Narumi looked back toward Musashi's Vice President. *Excellent posture*, she thought when she saw the girl staring straight back at her.

"At the very least, Matsudaira and Musashi have no way of opposing Hashiba at the current time. Besides, Musashi has not unified its own thoughts yet, has it? So how do you hope to negotiate with us and what do you hope to gain?" asked Narumi. "Listen. You are nothing but a disaster to all of the histories and peoples from Oushuu, Kantou, and Hokuriku. You are also a nuisance that drags other academies into the chaos as you attempt to wield your rights and future."

"Is it dangerous simply to speak with us like this?"

"Testament. If you were truly meaningless, we could come up with countless excuses, but you do hold certain rights and a certain future. So if the other academies learn that we spoke with you, rumors will spread that Date has fallen for Matsudaira's sweet words about the future."

Narumi told herself she could not show any hint of friendship here. She needed to make sure Date's intent to reject anything Musashi brought to the table would be apparent even if the records were leaked.

...Of course, Katakura didn't give me the authority to do anything but that.

"That is my intention here. Date has a responsibility as the future rulers of Oushuu, so I came here to provide a warning while you were hanging around the entrance to Oushuu."

She pointed the artificial index finger of her false right arm toward Musashi's

Vice President.

“Please do not involve yourself with the Date clan.”

When Masazumi heard what Narumi said, she sighed in her heart.

...That's an absolute rejection. She's completely unapproachable.

Silver Wolf: “What should we do? I can bring her to the negotiating table by force if need be.”

Vice President: “No, that won't be necessary. ...There are a few things here that seem odd to me.”

Me: “Eh? D-did I mess up bad enough for you to notice what I was doing?”

Vice President: “Calm down, idiot. Calm down and go to the guard station. Calm down and hold your arms out for them.”

Hori-ko: “Oh, Toori-sama. On your way to the guard station, please grab a garbage pickup schedule for Tama. The shop owner wanted to know what they will be doing for July's holiday.”

When she saw the idiot post “Fine then. I'll be back soon.”, Masazumi thought to herself.

...A disaster, huh?

That's true. We are nothing but trouble for the losing nations now that P.A. Oda's main force has shown up. And we're even more of a disaster with that crossdressing naked apron along for the ride. We need to do something about that. Oh, but not about the crossdressing naked apron. About the current situation. Actually, we do need to do something about that idiot. So it's both.

And I think I'm overthinking this.

So...

“—————”

Masazumi breathed in the night air which was more cold than cool on the roof. Then she spoke to Narumi.

“I would like to accept Date’s warning, but on one condition.”

10ZO: “You’re going to agree not to interact with them? That will leave Musashi isolated over the entire areas of Oushuu, Kantou, and Hokuriku.”

Vice President: “Stepping forward now would only strengthen their refusal. They can’t trust in the future we bring and are much more focused on the present. As things are, the future we bring is useless. And...”

Masazumi mouthed the words and Tsukinowa wrote them out.

Vice President: “Date Narumi will want to avoid having us do anything more. She is a leading member of Date, but she is not from the political student council. She is a combat member.”

Mal-Ga: “True. You don’t often find people like Asama who are technically in charge of divine transmissions and tuning the ship but can also act as a gunner.”

Asama: “Y-you have that all wrong. And I’m not a gunner. That’s a perfectly normal skill for a shrine maiden!”

A normal person with different standards is no different from an abnormal person, thought Masazumi. But...

Vice President: “But something bothers me about this.”

She felt something odd in her heart.

To sum it up in one word: why? Something felt off and she could not work out quite what. She felt something in Narumi’s attitude that felt like it would lead to a definite question if she pursued it.

...Why?

She continued thinking to clarify the unclear question in her heart.

...Why did Date come here?

Diplomacy was based on a mutual understanding, so to reject them, they only needed to ignore them. Instead, they had come here, made contact, and exchanged words.

Why had they done that?

She felt like there were several layers to the answer. Several layers of “reasons” were hiding the identity of the “why”. It could of course be a trap, but...

Vice President: “Crossunite, I want to hear your opinion. Do you think this meeting is a trap?”

10ZO: “Judge. There is a high probability that there is ‘something’ behind this.”

Marube-ya: “Hm? In this situation created by stopping Date’s Vice Chancellor from running?”

10ZO: “I say that given the fact that they contacted us at all. This meeting and their intentions have only shown their rejection. That means their intent was simply to contact Matsudaira, tell us of their rejection, and leave. Then why did they contact us at all? We don’t know, but is that because this is a trap, because their true intentions lie elsewhere, or because they want us to think either of those?”

Crossunite paused for a beat before continuing.

10ZO: “To find out, we have said we will accept their warning ‘on one condition’, but we were only able to do that thanks to what Uqui-dono and Mitotsudaira-dono accomplished.”

Uqui: “Tenzou... Don’t think that will make up for the betrayal of finding a wife before me.”

Silver Wolf: “Um, personally, I would prefer if that adlib was stricken from the records...”

10ZO: “None of you want to make it sound like we knew what we were doing, do you!?”

As the others started complaining, Masazumi looked to Narumi.

“We appreciate Date’s warning.”

“Those pleasantries aren’t necessary. ...But what is this ‘condition’?”

“Judge. It is simple. In this age, it is something done even between hostile nations.”

Masazumi corrected her gaze to push back against Narumi's.

"Musashi will send a temporary ambassador to act as a diplomat."

"...!? You mean...?"

"Make no mistake. We aren't trying to do anything to the Date clan."

And...

"This isn't limited to Date either. Musashi Ariadust will send temporary ambassadors to the Date clan, the Mogami clan, and Sviet Rus's Uesugi clan."

This is a bit of a gamble, she thought while completing her announcement.

"That is our condition for agreeing to stay out of Date's affairs."

Chapter 10: Plotting Girl on the Rooftop

第十章

『天井上の謀り娘』



不意に
困った時に
人はどうする
配点 (国家存亡)

What do people do

When they run into

Sudden trouble?

Point Allocation (Existence of a Nation)

In Honda Masanobu's home, a physical fight had broken out over the right to advance the footage frame by frame.

"Everyone, this is a gathering of human beings with social standing and power! We must not take this fistfight seriously!"

"Precisely. We are important people who have grown into upstanding adults!"

Masanobu puffed on his cigar while slamming his fist into the head of the commerce and industry guild.

"If we are to throw all of that away, we must be far more than just 'serious'! Yes, we are not serious! You could say we are prepared for our own destruction!!"

He blew out the smoke and took a large step toward the man who had been knocked back. He struck a pose before sending an attack into his opponent's wide-open torso.

"Secret Technique #7! Diamond Donation Explosion!"

Masanobu had the spell charm for a donation request on his fist and he watched the head of the commerce and industry guild bounce off the floor and slam into the ceiling. Only after seeing his opponent fall face-first back into the floor did he speak.

"It's too bad, but with the pathetic spirit of profit you prepared for tonight, you can never even hope to approach the divine monitor that Masazumi touched. My donation reversal is nothing to sneeze at."

"Kh! Then our only hope is to form a trinity and cause a miracle!"

The others began stacking up virtually displayed money around themselves, but...

“Oh, Nobu-tan, Masazumi-kun just said something interesting in her negotiation.”

When they heard Konishi’s comment, they all corrected their posture and opened their sign frames. Some leaned against the wall, some sat in seats, some remained standing, and Masanobu stood at the very center.

“I thought we would spend the night tracking down that strange group, but the Vice Chancellor sent by Date as a negotiator has made quite an interesting proposal. ...Severing off all ties, hm? A very interesting reaction.”

“Then what about Masazumi-kun’s return proposal?”

“Judge.” Masanobu nodded. “Sending an ambassador to all three nations is not a bad idea. Those nations are currently filled with suspicion, and any nation would want an ambassador because they are essentially harmless yet can become a powerful connection if the need arises. The greater their suspicions, the more they will jump at this chance so that the other two nations do not get the upper hand.”

He laughed.

“Yes, Masazumi. Stay on the offensive in your politics. That is the Honda way. Remember that and never forget it.”

After all...

“A Far Eastern politician must remain on the offensive or they will be destroyed. So attack, Masazumi. That is all you must do.”

Now this is a troublesome attack, thought Narumi.

According to the Testament descriptions, ambassadors were already being sent out by this point in history.

It had begun in K.P.A. Italia which led the Testament Union, so refusing could be taken as an objection against the Testament Union.

“It is true that even the Far Eastern politics of the Warring States period included sending commanders to allied states or sending a child as a hostage.”

“It was a diplomatic system meant to provide some kind of guarantee among allies. ...In fact, the Mogami clan of Oushuu sent their daughter Komahime to Hashiba, so there should be no problem with Date accepting something similar.”

Narumi chose to remain silent. She knew about the Mogami clan’s situation and the treatment of Komahime, but she had no intention of bringing it up here. She had no reason to do Musashi that kind of favor.

But she did have one thing to say.

“I do not have the authority to accept or reject diplomats. As an ambassador, they would be given full authority, wouldn’t they? Our Vice President would need to make that decision.”

“Simply bringing it up for consideration would be enough. You have my thanks.”

“Your thanks is a frightening thing.”

The Musashi Vice President’s expression did not change. She simply looked straight at Narumi. Narumi was not an expert in negotiations, so she could not tell if the girl was desperate or simply keeping her expression unreadable.

...This is an odd thing to feel so unaccustomed to.

She saw her limits as Vice Chancellor there, but that brought something other than self-deprecation. She found it amusing that her lack of experience here was the very reason they were so cautious of her.

“————”

A quiet laugh escaped her lips.

Of the three in front of her, the half-dragon spoke with his back turned. His sharp half-dragon’s hearing must have caught her laugh.

“What was that?”

...Oh.

Whoops, she thought. That laugh was careless.

She expected him to ask why she would laugh now, but...

“That sounded like it has been a while since you last laughed. ...Has the

situation in Oushuu kept you from laughing?”

Perhaps due to her inexperience, her prediction had been wrong.

“You too must be carrying a lot on your shoulders.”

Narumi could only choose to remain silent.

“Oh, my,” said a voice in the Main Blue Thunder.

It had come from Mary who sat across from Tenzou at a window-side table. She set her wooden spoon in her container of anmitsu, looked to the negotiation playing out for them in text form, and smiled.

“It sounds like Master Urquiaga has found Lady Date Narumi’s back.”

“...Mary-dono? What do you mean he has found her back?”

“Judge.”

Mary shrugged toward him, bent her eyes, and stuck out her tongue. A cherry stem was tied in a knot on her tongue, so she grabbed it with a handkerchief and wiped off the inside of the container.

“It is the same thing we took back together when you found me.”

Her smiling cheeks flushed a little.

“It is something you lose sight of when you become too focused on things other than yourself.”

Mitotsudaira felt confused as Date’s Vice Chancellor remained silent.

...Eh?

The timing felt wrong for the situation, but then the 2nd Special Duty Officer sighed next to her.

“Then farewell. I see no point in staying here any longer. ...Masazumi, Mitotsudaira, I will be waiting down below, so call me if anything happens.”

Ehh? thought Mitotsudaira again.

She was not used to this atmosphere and Masazumi was also frowning in confusion, but she was pretty sure she knew what this was. In English, it was called “love”. In Spanish, it was called “amor”. And in French it was too embarrassing to say. But she had briefly felt that was what was beginning here.

“A-are you sure?”

“What purpose would it serve for me to stay?”

“Well, um...”

Mitotsudaira continued her confusion only in her heart. After all, Date’s Vice Chancellor was standing in silence right in front of them, and...

...I-it’s awkward!

Part of her wanted the 2nd Special Duty Officer to turn around, but it was possible the situation in her mind was entirely a misunderstanding on her part. That was when Masazumi finally spoke.

“What has you so worked up, Mitotsudaira?”

...Am I the only one here with a girly mind!?

Hori-ko: “Worked up? We can’t have that, Mitotsudaira-sama. You must be low on yakiniku. ...Now, spread your legs and exert yourself.”

Something was probably being mimed over there. It bothered her, but getting caught in the middle of it would be far too dangerous. Instead, she forced a smile and spoke to Masazumi.

“Th-then we will be leaving it up to those three nations whether they will accept our ambassadors, correct?”

“Eh? Oh, yes. That is our condition for promising not to interfere with the academies of those nations.”

That seems a little contradictory, but it was a good decision, thought Mitotsudaira.

...Since the Testament Union allows diplomats to be sent to other nations, no one can complain if Musashi does so.

They did not have a good read on the situations in those nations or their primary academies, but she could guess that they had no other option but to reject Musashi and Matsudaira at the moment.

...That might be too naïve, though.

However, there would be no point in doubting that.

But the real decision would come from Masazumi who specialized in politics.

Vice President: “If we send them to all three Oushuu nations at once, they won’t be able to reject the offer so easily when the other nations might accept. That is part of why I want to hold diplomatic relations with all three nations at once.”

In that case, thought Mitotsudaira as she faced Date’s Vice Chancellor who was still silent and apparently on guard.

“How about we send you our 2nd Special Duty Officer as our ambassador?”

“Wait, Mitotsudaira!”

Masazumi saw Urquiaga turn quickly around and point at Mitotsudaira.

“Are you trying to send me to a world void of elder sisters!? I would rather die!”

“That alternate world has some pretty strict conditions.”

True, thought Masazumi, but...

...Looking at a number of conditions, Urquiaga might actually be a good candidate.

At the same time, Narumi sighed and leaned back inside Unturning Centipede.

She was leaving. Now that they had suggested the ambassador idea, there was no point in continuing the discussion. They could only watch as she left.

Narumi gave Masazumi a single nod and spoke.

“For any more specifics, I will need to contact our Vice President. ...I stayed longer than expected, but I think it was worthwhile.”

“I am very glad to hear it. Now, about the future...”

“Testament. Once I get back, I will make a report and get back to you with the results.”

“Will you be asking Chancellor Date Masamune to make the decision?”

Narumi did not answer. Instead...

“Let’s go, Unturning Centipede.”

With a metallic sound and the sound of something being swallowed up, the mobile shell closed.

Masazumi saw the complete form stand up in front of her.

The dark green and red draconic mobile shell stood three meters tall. Its facial devices turned her way.

“And with that...goodbye.”

Masazumi saw wings of light spread on its back. The wing generators appeared on the back and created four wings of light with the same coloration as the body. Unlike a bird’s wings, they were made up of solid-looking straight lines. Instead of flapping, they spread and vibrated.

...It’s floating?

Unturning Centipede’s feet left the Ariake’s roof.

“—————”

And it vanished.

“...”

Masazumi raised a hand to protect herself from the wind she assumed the sudden movement would produce, but nothing reached her. Mitotsudaira brushed a hand through her hair where she had moved in front of Masazumi to protect her.

“She’s using a buffering spell as she flies to ensure she doesn’t leave a trail. If she can do that and still pull off this kind speed, then she would be a somewhat

troublesome enemy.”

She was looking up at a small hole in the stealth barrier. That was the only sign of Date Narumi having left in Unturning Centipede and it would quickly vanish as the barrier repaired itself.

“The hole is at the very top. ...That makes it hard to even tell which direction she went when she left.”

“Yes.” Masazumi sighed to relieve the tension of the scene. “She still hasn’t let down her guard. ...Asama, remove the soundproofing barrier. Crossunite, can you send me a summary of the situation outside?”

“Has the situation outside changed any? How about inside? ...Has it, Rusu-san?”

Unturning Centipede flew through the night sky while looking down at the moonlit mountains, fields, and gatherings of small lights that were villages and towns.

It was traveling north. A darkening spell had been cast on the wings, so they had lost their glow and turned black. The setting moon shined on the mobile shell’s back and four wings as it continued northward.

An unlit sign frame appeared next to Unturning Centipede’s dragon face. The display said “Voice Divine Transmission” and it began by automatically sending its own settings to the mobile shell’s divine transmission domain.

Then a low male voice reached Narumi inside the shell.

“Vice Chancellor, the Vice President is asking how the meeting went.”

“Oh, Rusu-san. Yes, it mostly went as Katakura had predicted it would. I’ve set the sharing settings on the audio records, so can you apply your defenses and take them for me? That would make the encryption more efficient.”

Before she had even finished speaking, a few new sign frames opened.

“Testament. Very good, Vice Chancellor,” replied Rusu after a while. “What is your impression of Musashi?”

“You really do like gathering information on other academies, don’t you? I wouldn’t expect any less from Sendai Castle itself.”

There was no smile whatsoever in her voice. Meanwhile, she looked down to a point in the mountains where the shadows cast by the moonlight were shaped oddly.

The forest had been torn into, creating a long valley-like line. Unturning Centipede passed over it as she spoke.

“Musashi’s Vice President is a very stubborn person. If you give her an impossible hand, she will find a way to transform it into the best plan available. Or so it seemed to me.”

“Testament. Then Vice President Katakura would probably have a hard time with her.”

“Does he plan to confront her?”

“Given his personality, he seems to not want a direct confrontation. But he is already examining the records you have obtained in order to confront her on paper. ...Just so you know, he said the ambassador idea is within his expected margin of error.”

“Leave it to Katakura to make that kind of decision on the fly. Which means...”

As she passed over the shadows in the mountains, she looked to the several kilometer scar torn into the forest.

“Rusu-san, what did Oniniwa-san say? And what about compensation for the injured?”

“The 2nd Special Duty Officer is handling the compensation. As for his opinion...”

After a short pause, the words came.

“He said it seems to be wandering between the two of them.”

“It’s a curse of the history recreation. If we don’t break it soon, the Date clan’s dragon will be unable to fly free.”

“Agreed,” muttered Rusu.

Unturning Centipede changed direction. It had been flying north before, but now it turned westward.

“Now, then.”

Unturning Centipede drew a sharp arc through the sky and looked to Mito in the south.

“This should be about the limit for the Ariake’s air defense network to pick up something with Unturning Centipede’s size and power-output. Based on the thickness and quality of the stealth barrier, that is. ...It’s time to scout out Sviet Rus.”

“Please do.”

As she said “testament”, the mobile shell finished making its turn.

It fully faced west, toward the moon and toward Sviet Rus.

Then, it accelerated.

“Rusu-san, can you return the edited records? Also add in your special encryption settings.”

“Testament. I will also add in some new information.”

“New? From outside? ...I had already heard the clash between Sviet Rus and P.A. Oda had begun.”

“Testament,” confirmed Rusu before continuing. “Vice Chancellor, how do you think this will turn out?”

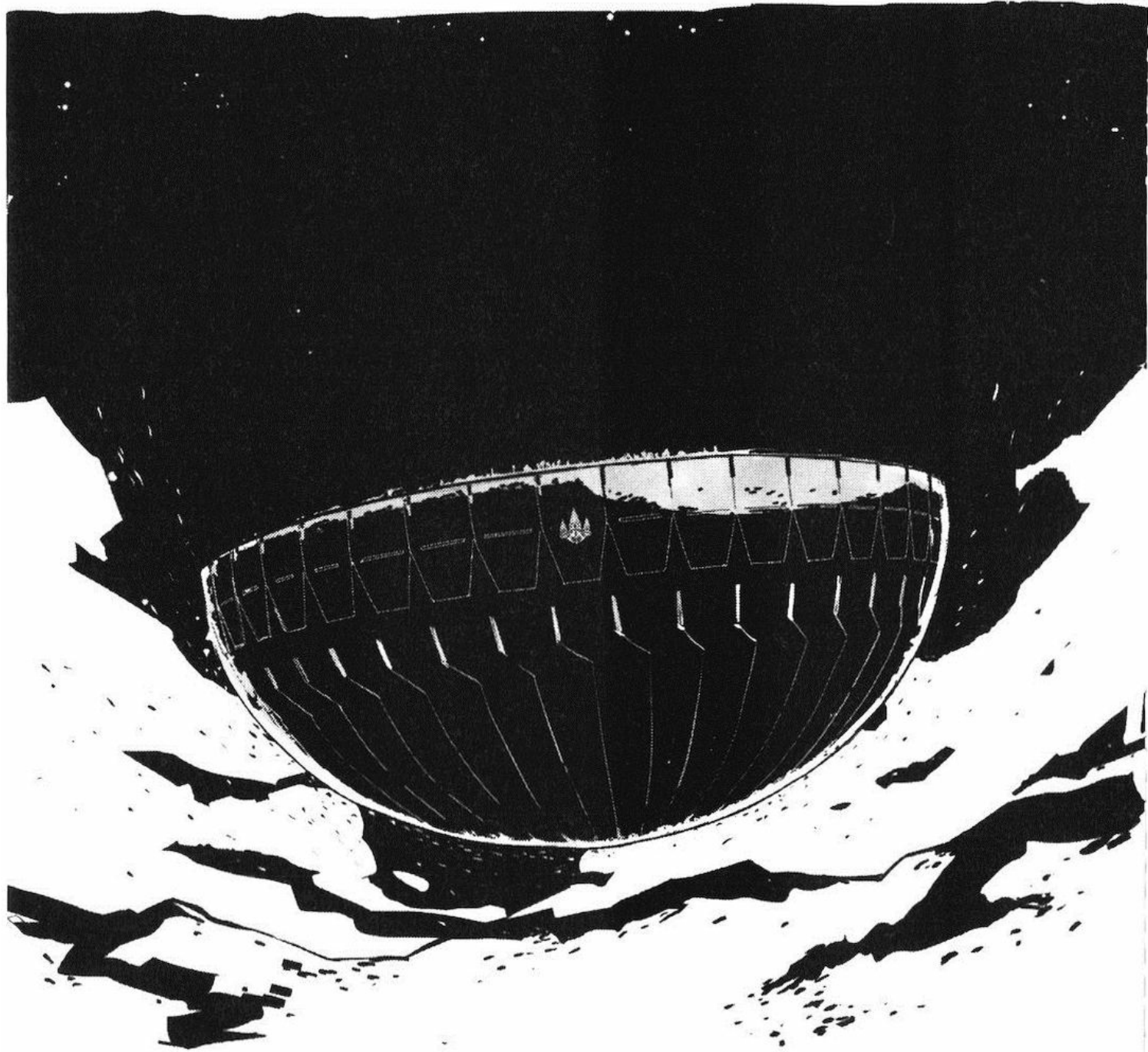
“P.A. Oda will likely push back the demons of the Ikkou-Ikki. They have already fought Suleiman to the end, so I can’t see any reason for them to lose.”

“In that case, your scouting mission should be rather interesting,” replied Rusu. “Sviet Rus’s demon warriors have resupplied and, at the same time, a certain city has begun to move. That city being a city of the dead, Russia’s oldest city, and a city of resistance that dates back to the Age of Dawn. In other words, Novgorod.”

Chapter 11: Corpse Princess of the Dark Sky

第十一章

『黒き空の死人姫』



見下しとは
何処で行われるものか
配点 (心)

Where does one

Look down on someone from?

Point Allocation (The Heart)

A male voice fell to the nighttime snowy plain.

“Hey, Toshi. Now that we’ve crushed most of them and are getting a break, I’d like to say something you might not like.”

“Then I’d really rather you didn’t say it, but I guess I’ll hear you out. ...What is it, Na-chan. Are you feeling lonely?”

“No, it isn’t that.” Narimasa used his chin to gesture forward because his hands were in his pockets. “They’re retreating right now, but I’m betting they have reinforcements coming.”

The aftermath of a battle covered the vast snowy field in front of them.

The sky was dark and the ground was mostly white. The white of the Sviet Rus demon warriors’ uniforms colored the figures collapsed across that large space.

Far in the distance near the surrounding forest, figures could be seen retreating or recovering their allies.

But...

“You can see that, right? Shibata did a terrible job of checking how many there were.”

Narimasa was referring to the new white color he could see.

At the base of the mountains far to the northeast were five white transport ships measuring about five hundred meters long. They were halfway through their landing process and countless figures were approaching on land.

“It’s time for the Ikkou-Ikki to leave, but those unmarked troops from Uesugi’s provisional border guard are here. It looks like that’s five thousand more to deal with.”

“Another five thousand demons really is a lot of trouble. ...Of course, I can get by if I pay an extension fee.”

“Where will you get the money?”

“I can get that from Shibata for missing this when he checked on our enemies.”

“In that case...”

Narimasa gestured with his chin again. This time, it was toward a color in the northwest sky.

That color was black, but it was not the color of the night.

“Hey.”

He raised his eyes a little.

“How many do you think will be coming from there?”

A city floated in the northwest.

The giant floating island was approaching with the emblem of Sviet Rus on its side.

It was Novgorod.

Toshiie saw the city approaching.

...That previous battle was just the opening act, so they're only making an appearance now.

“It took some time to draw them out, didn't it?”

“So this is Russia's oldest city that chose to be purged by Sviet Rus because they wanted more independence as a trade city. ...And they didn't give any help to Sviet Rus's forces while we kicked their asses. They're probably a lot of trouble to deal with.”

The two of them looked into the sky and saw a giant bowl there.

The shallow hemisphere appeared to have been directly scooped up from the earth's crust. That table was at least ten kilometers across and it contained earth, hills, a river, and the buildings of a city on top. However...

“There aren't any lights. Just like the rumors said.”

“Shaja. That isn’t surprising. The city is primarily populated by the dead, which is rare for Sviet Rus. And most of them are Living Dead who have no wills of their own.”

Toshiie also controlled the dead, but he did not know if that made him a good match for this opponent or not. But he did know one thing.

“Not only is it Russia’s oldest city, but it was nearly driven to extinction by that great purge. When they opposed current Sviet Rus Chancellor Ivan IV aka Uesugi Kagekatsu’s purge, sixty thousand out of a population of eighty thousand were killed. It’s said the nearby rivers and lakes were covered in a layer of corpses. Of course, in the history recreation, they all committed suicide on the orders of Mayor Marfa. And then all of the residents were allowed to ‘live on’ because she turned them all into Living Dead with a spell of hers. ...Only the outside trading portions of the city are still functioning. The residents require no food, education, or entertainment.”

“Hey,” said Fuwa from behind them. “Are we going to be okay here? Novgorod was one of the cities belonging to the Hanseatic League, right? They’ve grown more obedient after the purge, but their strength and willpower are still far from average, right? After all...”

“Yes, we know, Michi. Novgorod is indeed a strong city. They were purged, but since Marfa handled that via suicide, their weaponry and defenses were untouched. Some forces thought about invading after the purge, but they realized Novgorod was far more trouble than they had imagined when they saw the Living Dead working in the trading facilities like normal the day after the purge. Novgorod is now a city of warriors who do not fear death.”

“Keh.” Narimasa turned to the side and looked up at the floating city. “So you’re saying all of the residents are as courageous as us? Why’s that?”

“Didn’t Maeda just explain it? Novgorod is Russia’s oldest city.”

Narimasa turned back and found Fuwa had approached within arm’s reach. She took a breath before continuing.

“From their point of view, they are either the true rulers of Russia or an independent trading city. They have their pride as well as the history and economic power to back it up. That’s why Russia purged them and tried to

completely annex them.”

“Or so it says in the Testament descriptions. Right, Michi?”

“Shaja,” replied Fuwa as she spoke to Toshiie as well. “But we have our own thoughts on that matter. Novgorod is indeed a trading city, but they restrict their diplomacy and trading to the outside edges of the city. No one ever gets inside the city center.”

“Isn’t that normal? P.A. Oda places stealth barriers over central or important regions and only lets authorized people inside.”

“Yes, but Novgorod has been like that ever since it appeared halfway through the ninth century. And when Ivan the Terrible claimed he was going to conquer the entirety of the city...”

Toshiie looked up at the floating city sitting motionless in the sky.

“Novgorod announced they would self-destruct if they were invaded. During the following negotiations, Novgorod chose to have all of their residents commit suicide and have thus essentially parted ways with Sviet Rus. ...Of course, that was probably partially because they were in charge of the history recreation for Uesugi Kagetora, the rebel side of the Uesugi clan’s Siege of Otate. That forced Sviet Rus to keep their distance from Novgorod.”

“But what’s inside that bowl that they’d want to protect that badly?”

“Who knows. Demanding to be left alone to preserve one’s independence isn’t exactly uncommon. But there is one thing we can say about this.”

Toshiie’s breaths were not colored white, but he still took a breath just for show.

“Novgorod has continued on like this for a long, long time without even knowing who it was they let in back then.”

From his shoulder, Matsu pressed her cheek against him.

Oh, Ma-chan! That’s what I’m talking about!! he thought while watching Novgorod.

Several ships were beginning to leave its outer edges.

A moment later, a great noise and light burst in the sky.

“...!!”

It was the noise and light of a hammer striking Novgorod diagonally.

An eight hundred meter P.A. Oda ironclad ship had rammed into it from the southern sky.

“We did it!!”

Fuwa watched the full-speed attack from behind the two boys.

She had asked Shibata to make this recreation of Hashiba’s attack on Magdeburg, which Hashiba had described as, “Make an attack like this: Ei!”

It had definitely hit the floating city, and...

“The second and third ones are on their way!!”

Her words were backed up by two additional strikes.

The total of three attacks shook the night sky and created waves of frosty mist.

An avalanche of smoke was descending the slopes of the distant mountains and even the demons on the snowy plain stopped their approach at the great noise.

The additional hammer strikes had been made, but to Fuwa...

...My ears hurt!!

She had arranged for it herself, but she had not expected it to be so loud.

She had never heard anything that reverberated below her navel and not just in her gut.

...How are Maeda and Sassa fine? Because they’re crazy? Oh, that must mean I’m normal...

“Hey, Fuwa, quit plugging your ears and explain this. Did you arrange for that?”

“Shaja. By which I mean, I asked Shibata. I could predict that Novgorod would have anti-air firepower, so I had some of the ships that flew south slip away and

lie in wait. All three scored a solid hit, so even a city of that size will have-..."

That was when the mist overhead cleared.

The first thing she saw was the south face of Novgorod after taking three direct hits.

However...

"Hey," said Narimasa. "It's just fine."

"You're kidding..."

Fuwa pushed up her glasses as she viewed the enemy.

Her three strikes had definitely hit the trade port on the southern end of Novgorod.

She could accept that attack not doing any damage if it had hit the bedrock on the side or bottom, but as the wind blew the ether light out of the way, she got a better view which revealed that...

...It isn't even damaged.

"That was aiming for the city, so does it have a defense barrier on the same level as Magdeburg?"

As if to confirm that for her, a dull groaning sound came from above.

The wreckage of three ironclad ships scattered into the sky south of Novgorod like they were being brushed off.

"Novgorod has a fully-functioning barrier activated...?"

She knew all too well that it was her naiveté that turned her words into a question, but Toshiie smiled bitterly.

"I think that was the best possible timing for the attack. After all, Novgorod was in the process of sending their warriors out by ship."

"That's right. If they activated their barrier then, any ships caught in the middle would've been badly damaged and those outside the barrier would've been hit by the shockwave of our ships hitting the barrier. Either way, they

wouldn't have fared well."

Sure enough, a few black fragments were visible in the shadow cast directly below the floating city.

When the three ships had hit, Novgorod's vanguard had been caught by their own city's defense barrier or destroyed by the shockwave.

"They abandoned their own warriors?"

"Hashiba would call it 'the best possible decision', Michi. Of course, she'd worry over it a bunch too."

The scene and Toshiie's tone of voice allowed her to imagine it all, so she closed her eyes.

She brought a hand to her brow, relaxed her eyebrows, and opened her eyes again.

I need to pull myself together, she thought.

In the sky ahead, Novgorod was sending out more boats. The speed of departure had not slowed, as if to say what had just happened was only to be expected.

In that case, thought Fuwa. I can't let myself feel surprise or anger over what the enemy considers normal.

Everything that happened to the enemy before her eyes was that enemy's problem, so she did not have to worry about it. She needed to keep her emotional reactions directed toward her allies.

"————"

She raised her head.

Beyond Novgorod, the three ironclad ships fell from the sky after being brushed off of the barrier.

Even if they had been unmanned, that was three ships destroyed for nothing. And the blame fell on her naiveté. As the local treasurer, it was her duty to eliminate waste and increase the profitability of their battles. She had planned to accomplish that by bringing an early end to this battle, but she had failed.

“I’m not cut out for this. ...Anyway, Maeda, Sassa, I’ll start checking on the number of enemies.”

Based on the size of the port on Novgorod’s southern side, there were seven thousand enemy warriors descending. And...

“Michi, Sviet Rus is sending some additional ships too. You should add another six thousand to your figures.”

“Don’t worry. More importantly, Maeda, Matsu, and Sassa. Will you protect me?”

“If your estimations are correct, then I might have my hands full protecting myself.”

“Coward,” said Matsu.

“Oh, shut up! You try taking all of them on!”

Just as Sassa’s shout echoed across the snowy plain, a wave ran across that plain.

A new line of enemies faced them from that vast field of white snow.

Toshiie checked the battlefield again.

Before, the remaining demon warriors of Sviet Rus’s Ikkou-Ikki had been moving north to fall back, but they had been made into the rear guard as a new vanguard formed with double the numbers.

These demon warriors were the provisional border guards who had arrived from the northeast.

Plus, wooden ships were descending from the sky in the northwest, bringing...

...The dead warriors of Novgorod.

The oars of those hundred-man ships were rowed by Living Dead. Their bodies were covered in a white inner suit that prevented decomposition and they wore masks and helmets over their heads.

They all looked human yet inhuman.

Some had shoulders a size too big, some had lower arms a size too big, and some had arms or legs twice the normal length.

Fuwa gulped once and slowly spoke.

“For the history recreation of the population being purged to a quarter the size, four people were combined into a single Living Dead. Apparently, a lot of them are made from a single family...”

“Three cheers for human resources, huh? Do they think they’re mocking us with those easy physical buffs?”

“Well, one hundred of my ghost warriors combine into one, so I’m still better.”

“Better!” added Matsu.

“Yes, yes.”

Fuwa placed a hand on her forehead and looked into the sky, but then she stopped moving.

It was obvious why. The air was shaking as something pushed a great wind toward them.

“Novgorod is descending!”

There was no point in asking why. It would partially be to let the wooden ships descend more quickly, but more importantly...

“There she is.”

Fuwa could see someone standing on a pier sticking out from Novgorod’s southern edge.

She had pale skin and white hair. Her Sviet Rus girls uniform had been dyed pitch black and modified into a dress with decorative wreaths. That uniform was currently whipping in the wind.

Fuwa spoke her name while checking her telescopic *insha kotob*.

“Marfa, the mayor who oversaw Novgorod’s purge!”

With the sound of the sky being moved, Novgorod descended toward the snowy field. The wind blew, the forest shook, and the giant mass came to a stop just barely above the northern forest.

The mayor looked down on her three thousand warriors as they descended.

A thin smile covered her lips as she opened them and raised her right hand.

A moment later, a giant *sankt okno* opened in the sky above the snowy plain.

The Orthodox-style screen appeared as a giant window two kilometers across and it displayed Marfa's face. She kept her right hand raised as she looked clearly at Fuwa and the others.

"Perhaps I should say welcome, P.A. Oda."

She had a low voice for a woman.

"I am Novgorod Mayor Marfa 'Vedma' Boretskaya. I also have the Uesugi clan's Uesugi Kagetora as a double inherited name. In other words, I'm nothing but trouble for Sviet Rus."

Marfa spoke to the group down below with a smile on the corner of her mouth.

"P.A. Oda, you did well to take step after step into the territory of the demon warriors of the Ikkou-Ikki and the indigenous religion. ...Well done, living warriors. Demonic Shibata's troops have done a thorough job of this invasion."

She lowered her right hand.

"Now, how about I show you something neat as a reward?"

Novgorod began to shake as it turned to the side.

The giant floating city was being pushed by something: a group of shells racing through the sky toward their target.

Cannon fire rang out hundreds of times and light sprayed from Novgorod's upper edge as firing control spells took effect.

Marfa described the high-speed armor-piercing rounds as follows: "I hope this small sideshow is enough to satisfy you."

Without leaving a single shell behind, Catholic acceleration spells opened in midair and applied further acceleration to them. The atmosphere was split apart as they flew toward their target.

However, these piercing strikes were not aimed at P.A. Oda's main fleet.

Every last shell scored a direct hit on the five transport ships that had only just finished carrying down the additional demon warriors.

"To ensure the Ikkou-Ikki and border guards fight to their fullest, I will be rudely interrupting to sink those ships."

With those words, sounds of destruction rang through the sky.

Five transport ships bearing the crest of Sviet Rus were sunk.

Wind, the light of ether fuel, and flames burst from them all as they fell.

"I see you did not allow your aim to stray. Well done, comrades. ...And the light is a free bonus."

After the smoke and light of the explosions, five burning flames illuminated the snowy plain from diagonally above.

Down below, the demon warriors saw it happening.

"...!!"

They raised cries of protest and anger, but Marfa's expression did not change. The smile on the corner of her mouth remained in place.

"What's the matter? They were empty ships, weren't they? If you need ships to take you home, I will provide them. Or...are you saying you need to leave right away?"

So...

"You are the demon warriors who originally fought P.A. Oda under Suleiman's command. Surely you aren't thinking about what happens if you lose here. So I have simply made it easier for you to choose between fighting and living or fighting and dying. ...It takes firepower to provide this kind of favor. And..."

She continued while looking to the three young P.A. Oda members standing on the other end of the snowy field.

"M.H.R.R. obtained their spell to control the dead by watching my ancestors, but I am impressed you've managed to bring that spell so far. Once again, well done."

The spell's user, the one in a red uniform, bowed toward her.

Marfa nodded back, lifted the corner of her mouth even further, and raised her left forearm.

"It couldn't have been easy fighting this far so you could challenge Novgorod as the gatekeeper of Sviet Rus, so I, 'Vedma' Marfa, shall test you."

Meaning...

"If you can cut your way through my warriors and arrive for an audience with me, Novgorod shall leave Sviet Rus and declare its independence."

As soon as she lowered her left arm, a wind blew along the earth.

It came from much closer to the P.A. Oda camp than the snowy field. It blew toward the area behind the three standing there.

"...!!"

Figures in white rushed from the forest on either side.

Snow was kicked into the air as a group rushed toward those three and the P.A. Oda camp.

"With my dead warriors and the demon warriors, the only stylish thing to do is to have them burst from the forest with the invisibility spells of the dead. There are two thousand of them. ...Now, how will you cut through them?"

Fuwa was the first to react as groups of white charged their way from ahead and either side.

"Waaaaah! Matsu, what are we supposed to do!?"

"Calm down."

"...Michi, why didn't you rely on Na-chan or me first?"

"Hey, if Shibata's really not gonna make an appearance, then I'll take care of them all myself. Is that okay?"

Yes, thought Toshiie as a tremor ran through the snowy field.

...Shibata might be planning to stay out of all this.

In that case, what were they supposed to do? He of course felt he had the power needed to handle this, but...

“...Isn’t this weird, Toshi?”

“You think so too, Na-chan?”

“Shaja.” Narimasa nodded and pushed his sunglasses up his nose. “Even if they’re planning to leave it all to us, shouldn’t the camp at least put up their guard? That guy’s probably not letting anyone head out and I think I know what that means.”

“Eh? Eh? What do you think that means? Maeda, Sassa, what is it?”

“Oh, well, it means that Shibata trusts you, Michi. Or rather, that he trusts us to follow through for you.”

“...Eh?”

Even in the dark, Fuwa’s face visibly paled.

“You don’t mean...”

“I do. I really do, Michi. Shibata is having fun using us as bait to lure out all of the enemy’s forces. And...”

Toshiie turned around.

“And he knows that we can deal with whatever might happen.”

A single figure was visible in the camp back there.

It was a feminine figure. She was slender and she wore a Sviet Rus coat over her M.H.R.R. girls uniform to protect against the cold. She raised her hand and shouted over to them.

“Maedaaa, Sassaaa, Fuwaaa! Dinner’s ready!”

“Is that...?” asked Fuwa. “Lady Oichi!?”

“That’s right.” said Oichi as she continued waving their way. “What’s the matter? Why are you just standing out there?”

●戦場図●



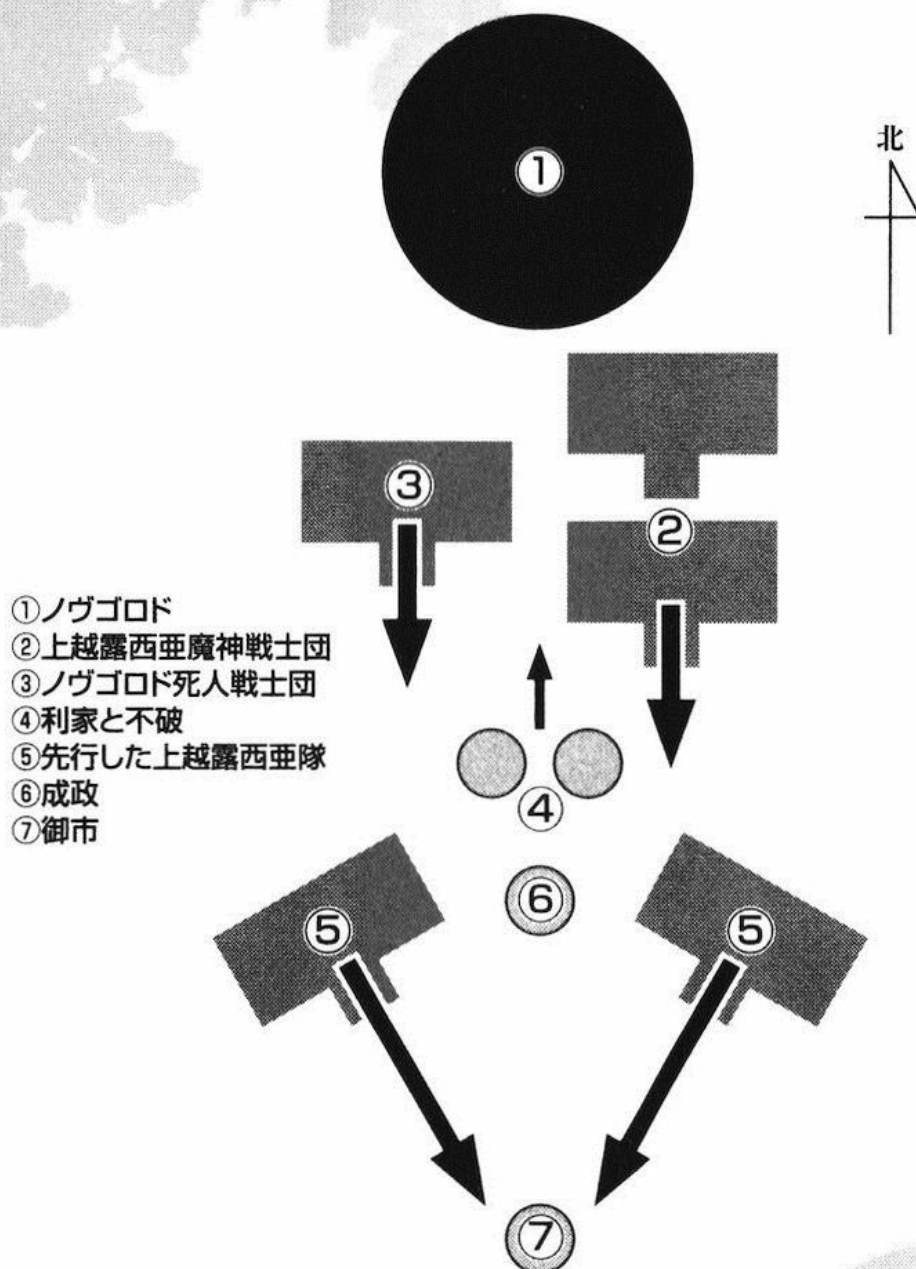
「姉ちゃん! 姉ちゃん! 何で俺達がP.A.Odaの戦場解説まですんのか良く解らないけどコレも運命! 運命だよな!」



「ククク運弟、出番独占というも勝者の余裕よ。祝いの酒を持ってくと喜ばれるわ。——私に」



「つーかマジ返したけど、今、どんな感じなんだ?」



「大体こんなところねえ。戦場の流れとしては、面を作るように押し寄せてくる上越露西亞の本隊が
いると同時に、先行していた分隊がいるのがキモね。

先行した分隊は、中央にいる三人を本隊と挟撃するか、またはP.A.Odaの本陣に行こうかというところだけど、そこに御市の方が出てきてしまった、と。そんな感じね」



「ああ、俺のエロゲ勤めを無視した成政がいるのか……。友達甲斐のねえ野郎だよなあ……」



「おーい、こらー、向こうの認識で
友達かどうかわからないわよー」

Battlefield Diagram

Toori: Sis! Sis! I'm not quite sure why we're explaining a P.A. Oda battlefield, but it must be destiny! It's destiny, ain't it!?

Kimi: Heh heh heh. Destiny brother, hogging all the appearances for yourself is one of the perks of being a winner. And that kind of winner loves being brought some sake to celebrate. ...I'm talking about myself, of course.

Toori: But to get serious, what's going on here?

Top right of map: North

1: Novgorod

2: Sviet Rus Demon Warriors

3: Novgorod Dead Warriors

4: Toshiie and Fuwa

5: Sviet Rus Unit that Moved Ahead

6: Narimasa

7: Oichi

Kimi: That pretty much sums it up. The main Sviet Rus force is pushing in as a solid wall while another unit has moved on ahead. That unit could have either made a pincer attack on the three in the middle or continued on to the P.A. Oda camp, but then Oichi showed up.

Toori: Oh, that Narimasa guy who ignored my porn game recommendation is there... That guy's a terrible friend...

Kimi: Hey, now. You don't know if he sees you as a friend or not.

Chapter 12: Changed One on the White Field

第十二章

『白き野の変わり者』



暴れるときの
注意事項
配点 (勝利の意味)

What should you focus on

When going on a rampage?

Point Allocation (The Meaning of Victory)

The ground was white and the sky was black.

On that battlefield, Oichi wore a Sviet Rus coat over an M.H.R.R. uniform as her voice rang out.

“If you don’t hurry up, all the dinner will be gone.”

Someone turned back toward Oichi’s voice.

It was Narimasa. He checked on the surrounding movement as he quickly turned back her way.

...Oh, no!

It was obvious what he meant. Oichi was running his way and waving her hand. Her comment was clearly directed at him, so...

“Oichi!! What the hell is Shibata thinking!?”

“Eh? Katsuie said I was free to do what I wanted. ...So hurry up! I did my very best today.”

...That idiot!

“Why do you have to make things more difficult for us!?”

“Na-chan!”

The enemy was already approaching from either side, so Toshiie shouted out while pulling on Fuwa’s hand and running toward the enemy formation up ahead.

“We’ll head this way with Michi, so you take care of Lady Oichi!!”

“Shaja!!”

He expanded the Israfil emblems from the tattoos on his arms, but instead of

planting his feet on the ground to prepare for a punch...

“Lily Flower!”

He used the white lily emblems on his leg joints to make a shallow leap toward Oichi.

Narimasa made his way forward.

He was approximately three hundred meters away from Oichi who was defenselessly running his way. Instead of landing, he took a skidding first step that brought him to one hundred twenty meters.

He prepared to take his second step which would bring him all the way to Oichi.

...I'll grab her without landing and take her back to the camp!!

He was taking the step with his right leg while his left was his dominant leg, but he was well trained. He was not about to mess up a simple high-speed leap. So he did not hesitate to make the final preparation for the leap forward.

“Lily Flower!!”

The emblems appeared on his bent right leg. Glowing lilies appeared on the ankle and even the joints of his toes as he made that second leap.

But he was too slow.

As soon as he launched himself forward, a white form fell between him and Oichi.

A corpse with reinforced legs had jumped down from one of the boats descending from the sky above.

...Dammit!

“You’re in the way, moron!!”

Narimasa transformed his leap into a kick. Instead of just sticking the sole of his left foot forward, he kept a downward angle to the strike. The enemy that had dropped in front of him had no time to dodge.

“Die all over again!!”

The kick hit.

He used the force of the blow to pass over the enemy that rotated three times in the air and he glided along a shallow arc.

The force of his leap had weakened, but it had not vanished. Unfortunately, the enemy was approaching quickly from either side.

...Will I make it in time!?

His second step ended at fifty meters from Oichi.

The enemies to his left had arrived too close, and...

“Eh? What is going on?”

Oichi finally noticed the approaching enemies.

...Oh, no!!

The enemies on the left had almost reached her. There were still thirty meters between them, but that distance could be covered in an instant by demons and physically strengthened individuals.

Narimasa did not have time to take all of them on before saving Oichi, but something rolled and bounced quickly in from back and to the left.

It was the Living Dead with strengthened legs that he had knocked forward with his kick.

He had passed it by, but now it was rolling past him.

He took a combat stance as the mass of flesh and bones scraped and tore across the snowy surface to his left. He also looked to the enemies approaching Oichi on the left up ahead.

“Take this!”

He sent out his left elbow and slammed his lily emblem fist into the Living Dead’s back as it bounced up into the air.

“Lily Flower!!”

With a roar of impact, he used his left fist as the explosive to launch the Living

Dead like a shell. The strike was a corkscrew that added an inward twist from his hips to his wrist. A powerful spin filled the Living Dead as it flew.

“...!!”

After the bursting sound of the sound barrier being broken, the corpse shell reached the enemy. The demon and Living Dead warriors rushing in from the left were blown away by the hit from a corpse spinning due to a powerful gyro effect and by the slicing wind that reached them.

The first three rows were soundly crushed.

Narimasa ran on ahead of those results. More enemies were approaching from the right, but...

...I'll make it in time!

He would be able to snatch Oichi with only a lag of two or three meters. Sure of that, he made a third leap.

He would easily make it in time. Or so he thought.

As he made his leap, he saw Oichi hold her forehead and shrink down.

“Ah.”

It was a bullet.

In midair, Narimasa did not so much hear the gunshot as he saw Oichi's movements.

She wobbled on her feet and then her slender upper body bent forward toward the snowy ground.

The gunshot only reached him afterwards and Narimasa continued watching what had happened up ahead.

...Oh, no.

His leaping body went a little limp in midair.

He realized the slower group on the right had been the true threat. Demons and Living Dead primarily used physical strength and spells, so they rarely had

any gunners.

“But was it that rarity that slowed down the group on the right!?”

He realized he would not make it in time anymore, so he ended his leap partway and kicked deep into the snowy ground as he landed.

The sound of breaking ice burst out as he stopped himself while the enemies on the right sped up in their race toward Oichi. They all raised their weapons toward her.

“Oichi is Shibata Katsuie’s wife and Oda Nobunaga’s sister! We will take your life as our first accomplishment!”

In that instant, Narimasa saw a color race by before his eyes.

That color was black. It moved in every direction imaginable as it raced between the warriors on the left and right.

As the raging black movement made its counterattack, something happened to the several hundred demons and Living Dead on the front rows of either side.

“...!?”

They were all sliced through and black blood sprayed into the air.

It did not happen instantaneously. Some time was needed for the wind to whip up.

But after that short time, everyone involved was able to see what had happened on the battlefield.

The front few hundred of the two thousand rushing toward Oichi had collapsed to the snow with blood spraying from them.

...What was that!?

Fuwa had looked back and seen what happened.

It was Oichi.

However, something about her was different from when Fuwa had seen her

just a moment before.

Her build was the same, as was her hair's length, her clothes, her shoes, and everything else.

It was her stance that had changed.

...She's hanging her head!?

She was looking down and almost seemed to have folded her body below the chest. Her head was bent down as well, so her head was closer to navel height than shoulder height.

Every last hair on her head was dangling down, hiding her face like a tube.

And a voice left the bottom of that hair tube.

"Ah..."

That syllable continued quietly.

"Aeeeeeee..."

The exhaled air was quiet and yet it seemed to carry endlessly across the plain.

"Ee."

She was sobbing.

The voice escaped from deep within the tube of hair and shining drops fell to the snow.

"Hyaah."

The drops were filled with body heat, so they melted the snow as they landed.

Soon, Oichi's entire body trembled. At the center of the enemies scattered across the snow and at the destination of the approaching enemies, Oichi bent her body even lower. A powerful tremor ran through her. She was crying. She shook her head once and a serpentine wave ran through her silky dangling hair.

"Ahhhhhhh!!!"

Oichi's black exploded within the approaching army of white.

Oichi moved in curves.

When a demon approached with a sword in his right hand, she made a quick rotation back and to the right. Her backwards kick sent her heel to the inside of the wrist swinging down the sword and deflected the entire arm outward.

The sword's trajectory grew diagonal and Oichi lowered her body in the middle of her rotation. Her hair trailed after all of her movements and she slipped out and to the left as if circling below the demon's right arm and blade that she had sent diagonally outward.

The demon swordsman clicked his tongue as Oichi slipped below his right arm and behind him.

"I won't let you escape!"

He tilted his body left and lowered it in order to increase the right diagonal motion of his sword. Now the blade would not hit the snowy ground and he could continue the swing of his right arm to pursue Oichi behind him.

He did so. He made a right backhand as if scooping up the blade from below. Even with its diagonal path, there was very little space to dodge it.

But Oichi chose to dodge regardless.

Something extended from her spinning body. It was the very head that was swinging her hair far out from her body.

"Ee."

The action seemed more careless than flexible, as if she had dislocated her neck, and it brought her head into a rotation outside her body's rotation.

"Eeeaah!!"

Instead of circling behind the swordsman, she entered a confused spin.

It was an inhuman movement. The twisting, unstable rotation looked like a dance and she kicked her right heel into the snow. That launched her in front of the demon who was swinging his sword back and to the right. She was just below his forward-leaning stomach.

Oichi had intentionally thrown herself off balance to launch herself over the

blade and back to her original location.

The enemy had fully swung his sword, so his body was wide open. Oichi tilted her still-spinning body to the right and placed her hand on the snow as if cartwheeling away from the enemy. Except she was not trying to escape. Her hair swept across the snow as she rotated her body vertically and sent her foot up into the tip of the demon's jaw.

The metal sole of her left heel hit the demon's jaw with a gouging diagonal blow.

A solid sound rang through the chilly sky.

Oichi bent her body forward and stood up just as the demon's jaw was swept sideways.

"Kh."

The demon's brain shook inside his skull. He fell to his knees, his right hand left the sword, and it flew away.

But half a beat later, his fading consciousness recovered. Strength returned to his eyes as they looked down at Oichi.

"Do not hesitate!!"

With that shout, he took a certain action.

He thrust both arms forward to grab Oichi.

As soon as the thick arms wrapped around her slender frame, the swordsman's comrades rushing in from behind or in front of him cast aside their hesitation as he had asked.

Spears, swords, and other weapons were thrust into his body.

"Ohhh!!"

The charm cylinders attached to the bottom of the weapons' grips installed a spell in the blades. With almost zero time lag, flames burst from the blades.

The swordsman burned.

As the heated light grew bright, the white warriors raised their weapons high. They let the corpse of their comrade scatter in the wind after he had burned

more to ashes even than charcoal.

“Славу товарищ!”

Glory to you, comrade!

“Ура товарищ!”

Blessings to you, comrade!

“товарищ! Славу Урааааа!”

Comrade! Glory and blessings to you!

The vanishing ashes fell. They still retained the shape of his body and clothing, but...

“—————”

What their comrade held was light even for ashes.

The heat-resistant parts of the armored uniform had resisted the flames even more than bones, and based on the amount remaining...

“There’s nothing...inside?” someone muttered.

The white army was gathered around in a circle and one of those on the outside shouted in toward the center.

“Toward their camp!!”

They looked toward P.A. Oda’s camp. The sword the previous demon had let go of had fallen there, but it was now being dragged around by someone such that the tip scraped along the snowy ground.

That person was charging toward them while accelerating her rampaging spinning movements.

“It’s Oichi!”

Black hair moved like a raging storm as she collided with the white circle without slowing down.

Oichi was hanging her head.

She spun, swept the enemy's feet out from under them, slammed her weapon into the enemy at full power, let go of it, stole another weapon from the rolling and scattering enemies, made another full-body spin to slam that weapon into them, grabbed the weapon she had let go of earlier, slammed it into them yet again, and let go of it yet again. She would hit and let go, steal and strike, and it all happened at the leading edge of her fluttering hair.

"Ee...!"

With her head hung and her entire body trembling, she rapidly rotated while sticking her hips, shoulders, and elbows out ahead of the spinning momentum. She would send it all out ahead of her as if collapsing and she would accelerate further.

Her hair hid her face as a black tube. The only sounds were the slicing, the clashing of weapons, the breaking, the collision of flesh against flesh, and...

"Eeeeeeeeeeee!!"

Her wail rose high into the sky and she seemed to be tearing at her hair with her entire body.

"Eaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!"

She stole weapons, cut down enemies, threw the blades out of reach, smashed legs, used the collapsing bodies as shields and stepping stones, and swung weapons around in both hands as additional acceleration.

"Ahhhh!!"

She moved onward.

Even as she nearly fell over, she forced herself into a rotation to hop back up. She ran fast enough to surpass the enemies trying to fall back, she thrust and swept with blades as she passed them by, and she constantly grabbed weapons from midair after having let go of them earlier. As if moving from weapon to weapon and as if attacking with every last weapon on the battlefield at once, in every place her rotation took her, she would grab a flying weapon's grip, spin it around with her fingers, and throw it to stab it into someone.

“Eeaaaahhh!!”

The wailing black hair raced across the battlefield.

For each weapon present, an enemy fell.

Chapter 13: Converser After the Festival

第十三章

『祭後の会話人』



出会ってからが
勝負です
配点（人生）

It's after you meet them

That truly matters

Point Allocation (Lifestyle)

Fuwa was running with Toshiie.

Even if they were moving away from Oichi, she was not so sure running toward the enemy was such a good idea. But when she looked back, she saw a black whirlwind of motion approaching them.

“Eh? Wh-what is that?”

The enemy was packed in tight around them. They were gathering along the central line from the left and right.

For the lowered-head motion that was stealing their weapons, running, and slicing through them, that central line was where the most weapons were gathered.

And just as Fuwa had predicted, Oichi was approaching.

The white enemies scattered to the left and right along a rapid and meandering path and the lowered-head blackness continued accelerating and wailing.

...Wow.

The Sviet Rus demon warriors on both sides and to the front cowered back and put up their guard.

“Here they come!”

But it was not an order that urged those warriors to resume their charge.

The dead warriors of Novgorod made their own expressionless charge.

They were Living Dead, but they had some slight memories in the catalyst holding their bodies together.

They raised their voices as they faced that almost explosively accelerating destruction.

“Славу...Марфа.”

“Славу...Марфа!!”

Glory to Marfa.

They raised their weapons, cried Marfa’s name, and faced their foe.

They used their modified bodies as if offering themselves up as sacrifices.

“...!!”

With a cry, they added in their own destruction.

They collided and were destroyed.

They were scattered, broken, split, and sliced, but they acted as if this was the proper course of action for the dead. They never stopped and the ones that could still move acted like it was amusing. All the while, they gathered around Oichi and returned to their state of death.

The demon warriors followed. Their pride as warriors did not allow them to fall behind, so they now faced Oichi instead of Fuwa and Toshiie.

They ran right past those other two on their way to Oichi, but...

“Ee...ah...ahhhh!!”

After that cry, the entire group exploded in white flames.

Oichi had activated the Sviet Rus flame spells on the weapons she was using.

She did so with each weapon she swung and abandoned in the air.

“...Kh!?”

As if counting out the number, the weapons stabbed into the ground in an arc.

A moment later, a chain of explosions linked that arc and the explosions traveled through the gathering warriors.

“...Ah!”

But it did not end there. Fuwa saw the black form jump.

...Up!?

Oichi held two large swords.

She had used the explosion to make a great leap and rapid rotation. She had been mainly attacking horizontally before, but now she used a vertical rotation to make her sword strikes.

And the attack was directed toward Fuwa and Toshiie.

Fuwa saw Oichi rotating toward her.

She was coming this way.

The lowered head and hair were using the explosive flames of a spell to power her jump.

“Ee...ah!!”

She was rapidly approaching.

Fuwa was running away, but she would not make it in time. Oichi’s rotation was going to accurately bring her right behind her.

...Here she is!!!

She landed but did not stop moving. She made a single roll forward to try to negate the momentum of her fall.

Fuwa could tell her body was in the middle of the circular path Oichi’s two swords would take.

With the size of those swords, she would be sliced in two.

Those swords were already being swung by her rotating body.

Fuwa knew she was not going to make it in time and she would be hit.

“Ohhhhh!”

But a voice and a wind cut in.

“Sassa!”

That was exactly who it was. He had caught up to Oichi and was about to pass her, but he gave Fuwa a sharp look.

“Guard!!”

“R-right!”

Just as she turned toward him and placed her arms in an X-shape, a strike hit the center of the X.

“Lily Flower!”

Fuwa was knocked backwards.

It was a light blow from Lily Flower, but it was enough for her bones to creak and to feel her right shoulder shifting backwards. *It's dislocated*, she realized as she flew back.

She seemed to float in midair as her acceleration left her and that was when she saw it.

Oichi was charging in behind Sassa. She had finished her first flip and was preparing for the next which would slice through Sassa. So...

“Sassa, behind you!”

She was trying to get him to dodge, but the timing was poor. His Israfil emblems would not reactivate in time.

As she flew through the air, Fuwa tried to make sure she would fall butt-first to the snow and tried to gather strength in her legs.

...I have to do something!

But just as she thought that...

“I appreciate how you charged on in here fully intending to rely on me, Na-chan.”

Three actions followed those words.

First, Maeda stepped up to Fuwa's right in his red M.H.R.R. uniform.

Second, countless skeleton arms grew from the ground to support her as she fell.

And finally...

“Na-chan, I just have to buy some time, right?”

White bones rose between Sassa and Oichi.

There were three in all, but they were immediately smashed by Oichi's blades. However, they wrapped their arms around those blades, briefly delaying them.

"Lily Flower!!"

The three skeletons scattered, Sassa's emblems reactivated, and he leaped over Fuwa's head all at the same time.

She looked up in surprise from the supporting bones as he flipped through the air, but he bared his teeth toward her in a look of joy.

"You idiot! Get running!!"

"Don't be so mean," she said before realizing what he had meant.

Oichi was already accelerating toward them again.

Fuwa screamed and quickly tried to get her feet back on the ground, but Toshiie called over to her as he ran behind her.

"Oh, Michi, you're slow, so don't bother moving."

"Eh?"

Her question was answered by voices from the ground.

They were ghosts.

These ghosts had been created from the ether of the burned bones and rows of them rose in waves. They lifted Fuwa up by the hips and back.

"————!!"

They passed her from row to row to carry her backwards.

She was transported by the rising dead much faster than running or jumping could take her. She widened her eyes and bowed her head while the ghosts carried her.

"Th-thanks..."

The ghosts began to shatter, starting from the back, but to Oichi, they were another barricade in addition to the gathering demon warriors.

Of course, neither the demons nor the ghosts could stop the fluttering black hair of that lowered head.

However the ghosts carrying Fuwa did respond to her bow by raising their bony thumbs. As they shattered, she bowed again and waved.

She recovered her balance as they carried her and she looked again to the raging wind behind her.

The black series of slashes and wails was still sweeping across the battlefield. The crying never stopped.

Fuwa did not know why since she did not know Oichi very well.

“What is going on? I’d heard rumors, but why is Lady Oichi doing this?”

“Oh, yeah. You stayed at Saitou’s academy for a while after us, so you wouldn’t know.”

She tilted her head at Toshiie’s comment and some movement arrived on the right.

It was Sassa.

He slowed his pace to stay alongside them.

“I transferred in later, so I’ve only seen it once and Shibata won’t give me a proper explanation. I’ve got a general idea, but what exactly is it, Toshi?”

“Shaja.”

Toshiie shrugged at the cries and collisions heard behind them as his vanishing feet ran along the snowy plain. He stared straight forward as he opened his mouth.

“The truth is, that is Lady Oichi’s true form.”

“What?” asked Narimasa from in between Toshiie and Fuwa who was being carried by the ghosts. “Her true form?”

“Shaja. It’s exactly what it sounds like. ...Lady Oichi was originally trying to inherit a name within P.A. Oda, but she modified her physical abilities to do so.”

Another wail echoed behind them.

“She must have been a kind person. Once she desired strength above a certain point, she realized she would need to cast aside that kindness or she could not use that strength. And that is why she can ‘switch’ to another personality like that.”

And when she switches, she turns into that? wondered Narimasa as the source of the screams crushed the enemy several dozen meters behind.

The Oichi that Narimasa knew was always smiling and enjoyed cooking and gardening.

He could remember several times when she had brought some food for everyone at the training grounds without telling Shibata.

“But,” said Toshiie. “An even better candidate showed up and Lady Oichi lost her goal. She was probably also exhausted from switching to the version of herself with such deadly combat skills. So...”

So...

“She withdrew from the name inheritance, but she was so skilled in everything except combat that she inherited the name of Oichi instead. Do you know what happens to Oichi?”

“Nope,” said Sassa.

But Fuwa did, so she answered “shaja”. When Sassa gave her a look of meaningless anger, she feigned ignorance and turned toward Toshiie. He had some thoughts about her attitude, but...

...Well, it doesn’t matter.

They were acting just like always despite being on the battlefield with a wailing and raging wind approaching from behind. He figured it was a testament to their strength that an idiot unaccustomed to the battlefield could be so carefree.

“Out with it, Fuwa. What happens to Lady Oichi?”

“Shaja. Lady Oichi was Nobunaga’s younger sister. To form an alliance that would strengthen the Oda clan’s defenses, she was married to Asai Nagamasa, head of the Asai clan. Nagamasa treated her well, but the Asai clan betrayed Oda and Nagamasa was killed in an attack by Oda forces. Lady Oichi tried to die with him, but she was admonished and returned to the Oda clan.”

Narimasa knew what happened after that because he had been part of the group that attacked Asai.

“Afterwards, Oichi married Shibata who also treated her well, but...”

He felt he was hopeless if this was enough to make him hesitate.

“After our master’s death, Shibata opposes Hashiba. In the end, he sets his own castle on fire and commits suicide along with Oichi. That is Shibata and Oichi’s history recreation.”

“That’s right.”

Narimasa heard Toshiie speak quietly.

His voice seemed too soft for the destruction occurring behind them.

“Lady Oichi apparently chose to inherit her current name because Oichi moves from place to place but is always treated well until the end.”

“Then what was that we saw during the attack on Asai?”

Narimasa recalled Asai Academy deep in the forest. They had been left with no choice but to destroy it when it rebelled against P.A. Oda for the history recreation and for current reasons.

Their final enemy had awaited them on the roof of the burning fortress-style academy.

“Oichi was there wailing with her head hanging and Nagamasa’s head in her right hand. We only fought the warriors at the entrance. There were supposed to be three thousand warriors inside the burning academy, but they had all been taken out.”

And...

“As she wailed, Oichi made short work of your ghost warriors.”

“Don’t remind me how pathetic I was there, Na-chan.”

Toshiie smiled bitterly and faced forward as he ran.

“Na-chan, you handle this.”

Narimasa also looked forward. They were already in the center of the snowy plain. The enemy warriors seemed to be on their way to face Oichi, but they were showing more than enough hostility as they ran by.

Narimasa moved ahead and collided with the enemy, but he was not the only one confronting them.

He heard a loud sound from the camp behind them. It was the wave-like rumbling of a charge.

“So Shibata’s finally come out!”

The enemy formation had crumbled thanks to Oichi’s charge, so the P.A. Oda warriors were hunting down the rest.

In that case, thought Narimasa as he continued forward, swung his arm, and pumped his body full of acceleration.

“Lily Flower!”

A strike starting from his right fingertips blew away the center of the enemy’s front line.

Their front line bent and swelled out. Finally, several of the large demons were blasted into the sky. But...

“Na-chan!”

Toshiie’s voice coincided with a second explosion of light behind them.

The wind seemed whipped up by that light and it seemed to fly through the night sky to land in front of them.

“Oichi!?”

Narimasa saw bending and fluttering black hair pass by overhead.

The flow of black dropped in front of him with the movements of a snake swimming down a river.

The fall was clearly faster than simple gravitational acceleration, but that disturbed momentum brought it right into the enemy formation up ahead. And it did so in a path traveling over those Narimasa had blasted into the air.

“...Ah.”

In an instant, Oichi sliced through all of the giant forms he had sent flying and blades grew from their bodies. Before they could fall to the ground, Oichi jumped further toward the center.

“Ahhh!”

She moved.

She rotated her entire body, rotated her arms, and sent hidden swords flying in almost every direction around her.

These were more than just swords. They had charm cylinders on the pommel which Oichi touched and activated with yet another rotation.

“AaeEEEE!!”

Flames exploded in every direction at the very center of the enemy unit.

Tearing sounds rang out as the demon and corpse warriors were smashed, burned, or blown away. Following the roasting sound of the flames, scorching heat filled the atmosphere and shimmering heat turned the victims to charcoal.

Even then, it was not over.

As Oichi rotated, the enemies who had slipped through the three hundred sixty degrees of flames rushed toward her.

They used their positions, numbers, momentum, and willpower for this final charge. Oichi was unarmed after unleashing all of her weapons, but a certain thought came to Narimasa’s mind as he too approached Oichi.

...Oh, no!!

His premonition proved accurate.

Several weapons reached Oichi’s hand as she rotated at the center of the

attacking demons. They were all of the swords that had roasted the enemy in midair. She had launched them outward, but the recoil of the explosive blast had sent them back to her before the enemy warriors could reach her.

“Hyaaaaah!”

The term “counterattack” did not seem adequate to describe the precision of the swords launched in every direction.

Oichi was moving.

She spun around and raised her arms higher than her hanging head.

“...!”

And she sliced through her enemy.

This was not a mere wide-range attack. She thoroughly cut and chopped at each individual enemy. She did not hold back in the slightest as one attack led into another.

Blades flew, thrust, rotated horizontally or vertically, sliced, smashed, stabbed, and were pulled out.

For each weapon, an enemy fell.

They were directed in every direction and toward every location and the collapsing battlefield seemed to blossom like a flower around Oichi. The sounds filling the air were the breaking of bone and flesh plus the waves of objects collapsing to the snowy ground.

Enemies were blown away, torn into, and burned before falling limply to the snow.

All the while, the rotating hair and body never stopped.

She released weapons, threw them high into the air, and never stopped even with no one taller than her remaining in the vicinity.

“Ee.”

Her toes, shoulders, bent back, and turning hips all looked in a certain direction: the south.

P.A. Oda's camp was there, as were Narimasa, Fuwa, and Toshiie.

As she turned her lowered head and body that way, she spread the claws of her fingers without hesitation.

"...Ah!!"

She was about to move. She would race forward as she wailed and tear into enemy and ally alike. But...

"Oichi!"

Someone kicked the snow into the air as they charged straight toward her.

It was Narimasa as he tilted his entire body forward to dash.

"I'll stop you!"

Narimasa did not hesitate.

...I'll stop her!

The fact that she was Katsuie's wife did not matter here. If nothing was done, she would destroy the camp behind him.

So he raced straight at Oichi who was running their way.

After one, two, three steps, the distance between them vanished.

The approaching enemy was currently unarmed, but that did not mean he could relax. After all, Oichi had been unarmed at the start of this mess.

He did not have a weapon either, so it would come down to close-quarters combat. So to accelerate...

"Lily Flower!"

He opened the white lily emblems on his feet, knees, hips, shoulders, and back.

"Orahhh!!"

His accelerating step smashed the frozen ground below him.

He showed no sign of holding back because he had once heard that, if not for this indiscriminate way of attacking...

...Oichi would rival the Five Great Peaks and Six Heavenly Demon Army.

What he had seen at Asai Academy was enough to not feel insulted by that comparison. As was what he had seen here.

...She's a monster.

As a human, she could “switch off” the fact that she was human and enter an inhuman realm. And after she became a “monster”, she did not try to control herself as a human would. She abandoned herself to all of the strength built up inside her and she ruled the battlefield while making no distinction between enemy, ally, good, or evil.

“Dammit...”

If I could do that, thought Narimasa, things would be so much easier.

If he had a barrier inside him, he felt it had to be that. Breaking through that wall would eventually give him even greater strength and bring his history recreation to its end.

“...!!”

He continued on.

Narimasa used his entire body to attack Oichi.

In an instant, black flowed through his vision.

While running, Oichi had swung her entire body to the side and launched her sweeping hair toward him.

A sheen darker than the night sky swept by before his eyes.

It did not hit him. The hair simply swung by in front of him. It was almost like a warning or a sensor. It seemed to say that death would come to whoever touched that.

But Narimasa did not hesitate.

He chose to move forward, but then a color other than black appeared in his field of vision from below.

It was the white of the snow hiding the ground.

Behind her sweeping hair, Oichi had kicked the snow up toward his face.

“...!”

His sight was stolen by that rising snow.

Is she completely insane? he wondered.

She had directed his attention the side with the horizontal movement of her black hair and then kicked up the contrasting snow in a vertical movement. Also...

...So that's what you're after!!

Oichi was trying to acquire a weapon, and there was only one she could acquire while empty-handed here.

“The ice!”

Thanks to the weight of the snow on top and the moisture that had seeped down and refrozen, an icy layer had formed below. It would normally not have broken and would only have thawed come spring.

...But I stomped on it!

Israfil borrowed the power of the earth and built it into his spells or movements. When used to accelerate or attack, he would shake the earth with a powerful stomp or leap.

Oichi had seen and understood that Israfil had destroyed the ground.

...Is she actually perfectly sane!?

She had rushed in unarmed to get him to attack.

She was not simply on a rampage. She would wait and react to the battlefield with split-second decisions, but for the most important points, she would predict things out a few steps ahead.

Her weapon now was a fragment of ice she had kicked up from the ground.

It was over a meter long and formed a sharp spear that would function as a piercing weapon.

Beyond her rotating and fluttering hair, her right hand grabbed the airborne

ice spear.

She thrust it straight out toward his face and Narimasa opened his mouth at the accurate attack.

“Oh...”

But he was not wailing.

“Ohhh!!”

With an almost angry roar, he took action.

He swung his entire body and stabbed his raised right lower leg toward the snowy ground.

“Lily Flower!!”

He launched an all-out attack toward Oichi.

Narimasa stomped his right heel forward and turned his entire body a bit to the right.

He lowered his hips, stuck his right hand forward, and slowly thrust his raised fist straight forward.

This was not a mere fist blow. His arm was still half-bent at the elbow and it was more like a tackle with his hand held a little forward.

But enduring the speed allowed the strength of his full body to rush forward.

He perfectly matched the timing of the stomp with the moment of impact, so the attack placed all of his kinetic energy on the front of his body. Lowering his hips placed his support closer to the ground, gave the force nowhere to escape, and stopped his movement, but...

...I just have to touch her to send the full force of the blow into her!

This technique allowed him to use his full strength over short distances.

The lowered hips left him with almost no reach, but he had immediately decided this opponent left him with no other option. She moved erratically, so he had made the split-second decision that a counterattack that supplied a

powerful blow from a touch would be better than a normal punch.

He built up his strength and released it.

He left his footprint in the ground below and the rest of that frozen ground shattered.

For two hundred meters around him, the ground bounced up from the stomp and the snow became a white mist. And in the center...

“I don’t care if you have a weapon!!”

He knew what to do now that she had abandoned unarmed combat and prepared a weapon.

“!”

The ice spear burst and vanished when his pushing fist struck it.

From the tip to her hand, it instantly turned to dust, as if being devoured, and then his strike continued on toward her hand.

...Hit her!

A simple touch would supply the same amount of force that had bounced up the ground for two hundred meters. The stomp prevented him from moving. Even if he shifted his stiff stance forward to extend his reach, it would only give him a few centimeters.

This attack only worked as a counterattack.

Meanwhile, Oichi did not have anything like an acceleration spell. He had instantly switched his attack and she could not dodge, so it would hit. But...

“Ee...!”

Narimasa saw the black wail vanish from before his right fist.

“...!?”

He immediately saw something else in front of him.

A vertical white line had fallen from directly above.

...A sword!?

It was one of the swords used by the Sviet Rus warriors.

It was one of those Oichi had stolen, wielded, and thrown away.

She had thrown it high into the sky, having predicted Narimasa's charge.

It was falling directly along the path of his charge, so if he had continued with his plan after having his vision stolen and being lured into attack, it would have sliced straight through his body.

But he had made a split-second change of plans.

That kept it from slicing through him and it instead fell right in front of his eyes.

Oichi had missed, but so had Narimasa.

"Kh!"

His fist was going to strike the sword stabbed into the ground in front of him.

But before it could, Oichi took action. She placed her foot on the hilt of the sword and launched herself high into the heavens above.

"Ah...!!"

She jumped over Narimasa.

"...You're kidding."

From about twenty meters behind Narimasa, Fuwa watched Oichi's movements. The woman made a large leap and avoided Sassa's attack.

"You mean she's after me!?"

The answer to her question was about to land right in front of her.

It was Oichi.

She must have barely pulled off the leap because her vertical spin was lighter than usual, but her feet were already positioned diagonally. The instant she landed, she intended to rotate and stand up.

She was also dropping accurately toward a certain object: a demon who had earlier been hit by a sword and collapsed.

He was breathing but not moving and the sword Oichi had stabbed him with was still in his back.

Oichi's landing point would allow her to grab that sword's hilt.

...The jump wasn't shallow because she had trouble getting higher.

She had adjusted the jump perfectly even while moving like that.

"...Kh."

This isn't good, Fuwa thought.

Up ahead, Sassa had yet to eliminate the momentum of his attack, so he could not even turn around yet.

As for Maeda to her left...

"Michi! Over here! Hurry!"

Fuwa looked over to find Maeda a full twenty meters to her left for some reason. She thought about why he would be there and found an answer.

"You ran away, leaving the girl in danger!?"

"Anyone would run away from that!! Na-chan's just weird!"

He makes a good point, she thought while Oichi prepared to land in front of her.

"————"

She determined what she needed to do, so she took a step toward Oichi.

...I-I need to be prepared!

With that thought, Fuwa stepped forward.

This might not work. No, it probably won't, she also thought.

But she was a P.A. Oda girl, so there was one thing she had to do. If she tried to run, Oichi would only catch up, so she had to move a little forward, and...

...Take that sword!

If she could get rid of the weapon, she could stop Oichi from attacking. At the

very least, if she erased the possibility of instant death from a blade, more possibilities would open up.

But was that really the best option here?

She did not know. But as far as the best option for Local Treasurer Fuwa Mitsuharu was concerned...

“This is all I can think of!”

She could feel tears welling up in the corners of her eyes.

“...!”

Still, she leaned forward and took her step.

She was determined to do this, but then...

“Oh, now that’s the spirit. You could learn a thing or two from Fuwa, Toshiie.”

A wall moved in front of her.

...Eh?

It was Katsuie.

It all ended with a simple movement.

The black fluttering was falling down toward the weapon.

“I love how passionate you are, Lady Oichi. ...That’s the ultimate lifestyle!”

With those words, Katsuie snatched her from the air with his demonic body and right arm.

He then breathed in and let out a cry that reverberated through the sky.

“This battle is over!! ...Because we’ve won!!”

Narimasa heard Shibata announce their victory behind him.

Narimasa did not stop himself from looking back.

...Dammit.

As he got up, he looked across the battlefield.

“She really did a number on them.”

Katsuie was exactly right about the battle being over.

Oichi’s charge and destruction had broken through the center of the demon warriors and left most of the rest in chaos.

About a fifth of them had been destroyed, but those enemy warriors had made up for their lack of speed and technique with numbers. Now, they were forced to rely exclusively on those numbers, and...

...That’s meaningless when their central command group was crushed.

The ground unit sent out from the P.A. Oda camp was working on mopping up the warriors who had lost their upper chain of command.

They would likely continue their resistance. With no ships to leave on, an end of resistance meant death or imprisonment by the enemy, but...

“They don’t stand a chance against us with their chain of command in disarray.”

Narimasa took a breath and looked forward where Katsuie was lowering Oichi to the snow.

He was worried about that, but her stance had returned to normal.

She had her forehead pressed to Katsuie’s chest and she slowly raised her head and spoke.

“Katsuie?”

She smiled with her eyebrows a little lowered.

“Can my happiness continue for a little while longer?”

“It can.” Katsuie nodded. “It can continue for lots, lots longer. After all, we’re newlyweds, aren’t we? If you look at the time period.”

“Are we? Ha ha. I think maybe too much has happened for that to count anymore. Like our visit to those historic M.H.R.R. sites.”

“Yeah, your lunches were so good...”

“Then I’ll make more for you. ...If you ever get tired of them, please tell me. And if you ever get tired of being with me...”

Then...

“My happiness will be over, so please kill me.”

“I will. I definitely will. After all, you aren’t going to find anyone in the world but me that can kill you. ...That’s what I swore back at Asai!”

“Ha ha. You could have killed me back then, but you were nice and you could still move even after being skewered thirty times. You caught me off guard when you hit me with that counterattack...”

Oichi sighed and loosened her scarf.

This revealed the scar from having her neck cut about halfway through. She gently stroked the mark from a nearly fatal wound and she narrowed her eyes.

“...How lovely.”

After all...

“You marked me with the proof that you can kill me. It’s so lovely.”

“Ohhhh! Lady Oichi just praised me. How about that, small fries!? Jealous!?”

“Not likely, idiot.”

Narimasa spat on the snowy ground, brushed up his hair, and walked past the two of them.

Oichi suddenly looked at him and narrowed her eyes.

“Sassa, thank you for not dying. You can’t let yourself die, okay?”

“Shaaajaaa. I’ll work hard on that one.”

Besides...

“I’ve got the higher position, so you don’t need to worry about that kind of thing.”

He turned back and bowed as he walked.

“Try not to underestimate me, Oichi.”

“Oh, oh? Naru Naruuuu? Why aren’t you looking her in the eye? Embarrassed?”

“You bastard!

Narimasa bared his teeth, but his shoulders drooped when Oichi told him to calm down.

He breathed in.

“Well...whatever.”

He raised his head with his usual expression back and he started toward the camp again.

He showed no sign of helping mop up the enemy. This was no longer his battlefield.

Narimasa started walking despite his wrinkled brow.

However, he suddenly came to a stop.

“You got a problem?”

He was facing a demon warrior collapsed in the snow to his left. The warrior wore a Sviet Rus uniform, but he had the dried skin of the desert type.

His stomach had been pierced diagonally by a sword, but he was still breathing.

“Aruj?”

“It’s Sassa Narimasa.”

“I see,” said the demon. “You took that name on Lord Suleiman’s instructions, didn’t you? And the great king’s sister also left for the Far East...”

“Suleiman was the one that betrayed us.”

“It would have been the Testament Union that ordered his sister’s death. ...I would say that makes two of you, but I suppose it was different for you.”

“Of course it was,” said Narimasa. “Surely it could have been stopped. But who was it that didn’t do that, left me behind, and let it all trigger revolt?”

He clenched his fist until it grew white and slowly took a breath.

“I will walk my own path of history now ...That’s what I swore to the lily flower.”

He took another breath and looked back behind him.

“Hey! Fuwa, you idiot! Let’s get back. This is Toshi’s place now. ...Why are you sitting on the ground?”

Narimasa saw Fuwa look up at him with a bitter smile from about a dozen meters away.

“Eh?”

She frantically began stirring up the snow around her.

“I-I’ll head back later! You go on ahead! Yeah, you do that!”

“Don’t tell me you pissed yourself...”

“Why would you actually say it!? You’re awful!”

“Fine, then.”

He approached her with his shoulders drooping again.

He then grabbed her back collar and dragged her behind him.

“Ah, wait! What are you doing!?”

“You should be glad I’m not kicking you back like a soccer ball. Honestly.”

He sighed and walked across the remains of the snowy battlefield.

“You handle the rest, Toshi. Go meet with that old hag calling herself Novgorod’s mayor.”

“Yes, I know, Na-chan.”

Toshiie summoned some more dead spirit warriors to help mop up the enemy

while he smiled toward Narimasa who was dragging Fuwa with him.

Now he only had to negotiate with Novgorod, but...

...Well, I pretty much know how this is going to go.

He glanced over at Katsuie who was sitting with Oichi on a waterproof mat they had laid out at some point.

“Look! Look! Lady Oichi! That unit was completely blown away! Upupu. That’s what happens when you don’t put your hips into it! When you all get back, you’re doing five sets of a hundred whirlwind foot stomps!!”

“Katsuie? Say ‘ah’.”

[illegible]

When people go soft, they go all the way soft, don't they? thought Toshiie.

“Now, then.”

He looked up at the floating city of Novgorod that floated overhead as a black shadow in the sky.

Someone sat comfortably on the edge of the southern pier with their legs dangling down.

“Mayor Marfa, P.A. Oda has created just the situation you wanted.”

“Oh? What an odd thing to say.”

A *sankt okno* opened to display Marfa's face as she smiled with her eyebrows raised.

“All of the dead warriors I sent out were defeated. And the demon warriors of Sviet Rus’s Ikkou-Ikki and border guard were wiped out. I am simply stricken with grief.”

She looked to the eastern land.

Black smoke was still rising from the transport ships she had shot down at the beginning of the battle.

“Help from Sviet Rus is not going to arrive in time and I have lost my excellent warriors and comrades.”

She maintained her raised eyebrows and smile.

“You could say we have been isolated here.”

“Then what will you do?”

“Testament. It’s simple.”

She stood up on the pier and looked down at him. Her direct but smiling gaze poured kindly down.

“Testament,” she said again. “If we’re isolated, then we have no choice. To preserve Novgorod’s benefit for Sviet Rus, we will agree to assist P.A. Oda if you agree not to invade us.”

Marfa used a *sankt okno* to view the P.A. Oda treasurer far below.

She spoke to someone else when she noticed that treasurer looking back up at her without fear.

“Toby, can you tell me his name now?”

“Of course,” replied the elderly man standing behind her.

He was short and skinny, but he silently walked up behind her and looked down.

“That is P.A. Oda Treasurer Maeda Toshiie.”

“Heh. He’s modified the spell my ancestors completed and he uses it on ghosts... Makes things nice and lively for him too. What about you?”

“I do not have many descendants. ...From what I have heard, some of them have come to Kantou, so I am more interested in that.”

“I see,” said Marfa with a nod and a breath.

Her breath did not appear white in the sky. That was a trait of the Living Dead races and she used that cold breath to speak to Maeda.

“You understand what I mean by ‘assisting’ you, right?”

“Testament. You will lend us your military strength and you will battle Sviet Rus, but we are not allowed inside, correct? Thank you very much.”

“Testament,” she said with another nod.

She glanced back at the city of Living Dead simply carrying goods back and forth. The city was poorly maintained and beginning to rot, but her gaze fell on the stone city hall at the center.

“This city has long been a symbol of resistance. Each mayor has sworn along with the residents to protect this place. ...Now, has P.A. Oda forgotten about that? Or is it kept secret?”

“I know about it. Secondhand at least.”

“Oh?” Marfa raised her eyebrows. “If you know, then keep quiet. You’ll get in the way of my love.”

“...Your love?”

“Current Sviet Rus Chancellor and Student Council President Ivan the Terrible aka Uesugi Kagekatsu is my classmate. We parted ways, but he asked me to do some troublesome things like that purge or inheriting the name of a rebel. I don’t mind dying, but he hasn’t been visiting lately. Now...”

Marfa laughed.

“I’d like some social status. Maeda, the Testament Union belongs to all of you now, doesn’t it? If Novgorod agrees not to confront you, will you give me an inherited name?”

“You have inherited the names of Novgorod Mayor Marfa and Nagao Kagetora, so I would think you could inherit most any name you wanted. What name would you like?”

“Testament. Well... In order to harass Mr. Terrible, how about I take Shibata Shigeie, the commander who betrayed Uesugi for Oda? And...”

Her smile deepened.

“How about giving Novogorod the name of Nanao Castle?”

Fuwa gasped as Sassa dragged her.

...Nanao Castle!?

“You can’t, Maeda! The retreat of the Shibata forces that leads to Nobunaga’s assassination began with the Battle of Tedorigawa caused by Nanao Castle joining Oda! If Novgorod is treated as Nanao Castle while it assists P.A. Oda, it will lead to Nobunaga’s assassination!”

“I was thinking the same thing, but it also means something else.”

Namely...

“As the Shibata forces, we would be able to attack Sviet Rus’s forces without holding back. With the Testament Union on our side, we can make our own interpretation of our ‘retreating battle’ and the ‘counterattack that eventually ends up as a retreat’. We could even burn Sviet Rus to the ground before leaving if we wanted to.”

Toshiie addressed Marfa again.

“Mayor Marfa, are you asking for the Nanao Castle name in order to protect Novgorod from both P.A. Oda and Sviet Rus?”

“Oh? You’re pretty sharp,” said Marfa. “You’re exactly right. If we become Nanao Castle which defects to Oda, then if P.A. Oda ever tries to attack us, we can ask Sviet Rus for help in the name of stopping your violation of the Testament descriptions. But if Sviet Rus tries to invade, we can ask P.A. Oda for help. ...The enemy of our enemy is our enemy. That’s our way of thinking.”

“I see,” replied Maeda. “This is a complicated issue, so I would like to let another representative think it over. Of course, I think we should have a quick answer for the other issues. That is, your neutrality and Shibata Shigeie’s name. It is possible we will ask you to come out and fight to prove you are serious, so please do so if it comes to that.”

Got that?

“Surely you can do that much, Former Sviet Rus Vice Chancellor.”

Marfa smiled bitterly at Maeda’s words.

“I see. ...Does he know what I was given earlier as if as a parting gift? P.A. Oda is rather interesting.”

She smiled and spoke to Maeda as he bowed inside the *sankt okno*.

“Now, Novgorod will announce its neutrality and leave this region until you have news for us. ...Go forth, P.A. Oda. The people of Novgorod will watch you continue safely on.”

She laughed bitterly, gave the ground below a sweeping glance, and stood from the pier.

“Farewell. I must greet a guest soon and I can’t have them catching wind of these spells. ...I will be waiting for good news.”

“Novgorod...fell back?”

Inside the Main Blue Thunder, Masazumi frowned at the information from Mitotsudaira’s mother.

“This is getting dangerous. P.A. Oda is entering Sviet Rus from the southwest.”

Still Got It: “Testament. The situation is unknown, but Novgorod has fallen back based on some form of agreement. Most likely, P.A. Oda has promised not to attack them. And now P.A. Oda is moving their front line further in.”

The likely source of the information was either Tomoe Gozen or Suleiman. News of Novgorod’s action would be based on visual information, so the news was reliable even if the reason was unknown.

Mitotsudaira tilted her head.

“Could their western line of defense really have betrayed them at a time like this?”

Gin tilted her head and responded.

“It is possible based on the Testament descriptions. This may be the history recreation of the Shibata clan’s rebellion. The Shibata clan defended western Jouetsu, but they reached an agreement with the Oda clan regarding a compensation issue, which spread the flames of war for quite some time afterwards.”

“Novgorod Mayor Marfa probably inherited a name from the Shibata clan as

insurance against Oda. She's trying to take a neutral position between P.A. Oda and Sviet Rus."

Still Got It: "That's right. I think it makes the most sense to think Novgorod wished to reclaim the independence it had in the past. But that doesn't seem like enough. ...Now, Nate, I don't think I've had enough either, so I'm going to go invade your father. From the southwest today!"

Masazumi thought to herself while Mitotsudaira erased all of the sign frames that popped up in quick succession.

...Hashiba's restraints, Oushuu's reaction, the Date clan cutting all ties with us, Novgorod betraying Sviet Rus, and P.A. Oda's invasion...

She felt like something big was happening.

It all felt connected, but she also felt like at least one piece was still missing.

As she wondered what it could be, Crossunite tapped on her shoulder.

"Hm? What is it, Crossunite?"

"Judge. I just received word concerning Neshinbara-dono's absence."

He placed a hand on his chin and slowly continued.

"It would seem his tracks end at the collapsed supplies on Musashino's stern."

"You mean...?"

Everyone frowned and focused on the 1st Special Duty Officer ninja.

"Just in case, I will be heading out ahead to examine the area. If you have time, it might be good for you to stop by too, Masazumi-dono. He is a fellow member of the Student Council."

Chapter 14: Resting Girl in a Double Location

第十四章

『二重場所の一息娘』



懐古という
言葉のイメージは
何故後ろ向きなのか
配点（振り返り）

Why does the word “nostalgia”

Have such backwards facing

Ring to it?

Point Allocation (Looking Back)

A large space was still filled with darkness.

Eight giant containers held kilometer long ships that were being remodeled.

Each ship was mostly covered by sheets and prefab wooden structures, and sounds of work came from every site lit by the nighttime illumination.

However, there was one spot that was lit yet had sounds other than work.

It was in one corner of a materials yard at the far back of the overall space. For a while now, lights had been shining from the ceiling and an alarm would sound at a regular interval.

Someone looked down at it from the main bridge crossing the central space.

“Honestly, Nezu-kun, it hasn’t even been four hours since we got here and we’re already causing bloodshed in the materials yard to take out Musashi’s Secretary?”

“When things happen, they happen. And when you make them happen, you make them happen, Anayama. Keep in mind that the Ariake is also an event site.”

That reply came from a boy wearing a work vest over a Far Eastern summer uniform. His name was Nezu, his barely opened mouth did not move, and he stared to aft with his elbows on the bridge railing.

His eyes were focused on a certain position in the largescale materials yard. A spotlight shined on that one area and a few work gods of war were on the scene.

They were restoring the collapsed areas once they were done being inspected.

As he watched that, he stepped on a screw fallen at his feet.

“The collapse injured some workers and guards, but the details are still

unknown... Yuri did this on her own, didn't she? It was a little too noticeable if you ask me."

"The plan was to have Yuri-kun do most of the work with Isa-kun assisting, so I assume that's what happened. The question is how it turned out. ...Are you worried about Yuri-kun?"

Despite the question, Anayama himself was nowhere to be seen.

Other than the people who sometimes walked past, Nezu was the only one here. Still, he spoke as if letting his voice drop down over the side of the bridge.

"We have nowhere else to go, so why wouldn't we be worried for each other?"

"We have nowhere to go, but we have somewhere we managed to reach and somewhere that has accepted us, don't we?"

"That's only because our teachers were so kind," said Nezu. "History and power were not so kind. ...We assumed our future was set in stone and that it was destiny, so we let our guard down. And that's why we ended up being 'Unneeded'."

"What's wrong with that? We found our way to a kind place in the end."

"Yuri and I still feel guilty for what happened."

"Nezu-kun."

"What?" asked Nezu.

"I'm impressed you lasted nearly three weeks on the Ariake when you take everything so seriously and love talking so much."

"Yes, about a week after I arrived, a naked boy fell down a pit on the work site and a chain pulled him back up again, but it only elicited some scattered applause from the people around me. That was when I decided this place will lead you down the wrong path in life."

So...

"I became a cold character who lives in his own world. I only have to cut myself off from the outside world and everyone around me will decide for me what kind of character I am."

“I see. ...You’ve grown, Nezu-kun. The icy boy who would tell people ‘it isn’t your fault’ every time he attacked them has started making masochistic jokes. I’m impressed by the Ariake’s brainwashing effect.”

“I don’t recall saying that every time I attacked. Only about seven or eight times out of ten.”

Anyway...

“But when I work, I do it like you would, so don’t worry. ...You have work to do yourself, don’t you? On the intelligence gathering front.”

“Yes, that’s my specialty and I have a lot to do there.” The wind moved a bit as the voice spoke. “Honestly, it must be the Musashi’s doing that I feel like the world is beginning to move and we’re at the center of it all. What a convenient age we live in.”

“...Are you fine not playing the lead role?”

Nezu’s question was not answered. The voice spoke of something else.

“Nezu-kun, it’s about time. The lift is descending. The next move will be taking place down below, so give me some help. ...Yes, help me face Musashi’s Vice Chancellor.”

A few torch spells illuminated a wooden room.

It was a Far Eastern style room, but it had more Western style ceiling and it was filled with barrels, firewood, and food.

The entrance was left wide open and a sign was set up on an easel. It was the Blue Thunder’s sign with an added notice saying, “During the remodeling, we will be open 24 hours a day.”

There was only one customer inside looking at the sign. She was sitting in front of a teacup after finishing her food at the table.

“Futayo-chan? ...I can call you ‘-chan’, right?”

Futayo gave a small nod to the voice leaving the kitchen in the back of the café. Her hands were placed together on her lap.

“Judge. I do not mind at all.”

“Oh, so you’re still using that old-fashioned speech style, are you? It sounds pretty authentic, unlike Tenzou’s.”

“Tenzou...”

Oh, she must mean that ninja, realized Futayo.

He was always hiding his presence, so she sometimes viewed him simply as a moving part of the background.

...Mary-sama does well to actually perceive him.

Having a spirit-user’s sight and having him interact with her may help there, she thought. But it must be my inexperience preventing me from perceiving him, she also thought.

...Inexperience.

That thought brought her eyes to the spear leaning against the chair next to her.

It was the replica of Tonbokiri made by Kantou IZUMO.

The real one was currently being repaired at Kantou IZUMO.

That meant she only had a fake.

But even as a fake, it was exactly like the real one except for the main device. The shaft could extend just the same, the weight distribution was identical, and a substitute cutting spell could be voice-activated.

“And when jumping or running, the spell gyros detect it, causing lights to flash and spell sound effects to play...”

If her father had been alive, he would have killed to get his hands on it. She could easily imagine her childish father teasing Kazuno while mimicking the sound effects – “Hyuhhh... Chubyuhhhhn! Supyoh zupyoh!!” – and ending up having her chase him around with butcher knives.

...But thinking about that sort of thing makes me feel fainthearted.

She wanted to stop clinging to the past.

She wanted to focus on and think about the here and now.

There was no problem with the Tonbokiri replica. The main OS's thought patterns used the same program as the real one and the memories would be transferred over once the real one was fixed, but...

"Because it is the same as the real one...it will not recognize me as its master."

The spear remained silent. The dragonfly indicator on the main device indicated the remaining ether fuel, but it remained entirely red because she had not used it. According to the manager of Kantou IZUMO's Kashima Shrine Division where it had been developed: "This is a tiny version of Tonbokiri's ability. Please get by with that for now."

...But it does not matter if I cannot activate it.

She had told Masazumi, Horizon, and the black algae creatures about it and they had said the following:

"Regaining your power is your job, but tell me if there is anything I can do to help."

"If you are hungry, stop by the Blue Thunder."

"Depressed?"

But there was nothing they could do to help at the moment, I stopped by the Blue Thunder as I was hungry, and I suppose I am feeling depressed, she thought. They are all looking in the right direction.

As she nodded a few times, a voice and some movement approached.

"Here's what you had leftover plus tomorrow's breakfast."

A paper bag was held out from the side of the table and Futayo looked to who was holding it.

"...Manager-dono."

Futayo remained seated, but she corrected her posture and bowed.

Her ponytail spilled forward, but she snapped it back when she raised her head.

“Thank you very much.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine. It’s a parent’s duty to assist their children’s friends.”

“A parent’s?”

That was exactly what she had just decided not to think about, so she indulged in that answer and simply accepted it.

But the manager tilted her head, looked at Futayo’s body, and focused on her arms and cheeks.

“Were you training?”

Futayo had healing charms on various parts of her body and she gave a quick nod.

“Judge. Naito-dono and Asama-dono gave me these. ...I told them I was fine without them, but they insisted.”

“Yeah, that sounds like Go-chan and Tomo-chan. It probably isn’t the best idea for the Vice Chancellor to be showing off fresh injuries, but at the moment, maybe you should show off that you’ve been training hard enough to hurt yourself.”

“Asama-dono said the same thing.”

“Ah ha ha. She beat me to the punch, did she?”

The manager laughed with her hands on her hips, but then Futayo asked her a question.

“Manager-dono, have you known the others for a long time?”

“For the most part. ...After we lost Horizon, my idiot stopped coming here. That cut me off from some of them, but, well, it’s the present that matters.”

“Then what is this place?”

“Technically, this is the Blue Thunder and our home is the Main Blue Thunder. This place was originally run by a friend of mine, but when we lost her, I thought it would be best to preserve the place.”

The manager smiled toward port where the Musashino was in its dock.

“But after we lost Horizon...I guess that was in middle school? Well, the kids said they wanted to use the main one at home.”

“You mean the id-...the Chancellor and Kimi-dono?”

“And all the others.”

After saying that, the manager noticed Futayao’s teacup.

The tea had gone cold, so she picked it up and walked lightly back to the kitchen.

“How about I get you something cuter?”

“Thank you, but that is not necessary.”

“Then I’ll get you some cocoa.”

Anticipation filled Futayo’s heart when she heard that.

...That is that Western bean tea!!

Kazuno-sama once made some of that. My father took one sip and shouted “What the hell!? This is too sweet! Soy sauce! Let’s put some soy sauce in!” He did put soy sauce in, but once he got the ratio just right, it made a decent soy sauce dessert. But then Lord Motonobu worked out the ratio himself and stole the rights to the drink. Ever since losing that business opportunity, the word cocoa was banned in our house as an “enemy word”.

“Hm.”

Wasn’t I not supposed to be thinking about the past? I need to work harder at that.

Then the manager spoke from the kitchen.

“By the way, Futayo-chan, did you hit your back?”

Did I let it show in my movements? she wondered with a tilt of her head.

“I was doing some wall running for training, but my foot slipped.”

“Oh, that thing Tenzou does?”

“No, it was with the Tachibana couple. The three of us have been having sex a lot lately.”

It took about five seconds before the response came.

“...Oh, s-sorry about that. You caught me off guard with that one. Yeah, I’ll scold someone or other for that one later, but you can keep doing it since it’s kind of funny. So, um...”

“Yes?”

Futayo heard the manager say “judge” and move around in the kitchen.

“Futayo-chan, have you found a decent teacher or dojo?”

“...Teacher?”

She had never thought about it, but she did hear the word “judge” from the side.

“I’m sure you got some excellent training from your family, but once you move away from all that, you’ll grow lax with the fundamentals. You need a training plan that matches the rising physical abilities of a growing girl. Do you have a place or a person to manage that for you?”

“...No, I do not.”

“Then it’s impressive you’ve been fighting so well.”

Is that how it works? thought Futayo when she saw the manager’s bitter smile. *My father and Kazuno-sama did not have someone they could call a master.*

...That must mean I am inferior to them.

As she was reminded of that fact, the manager smiled, nodded, and placed a bamboo bottle on the table.

“Here’s some iced cocoa. I put it in a to-go cup, so take your time and drink it at home. And take the time to think about some things, okay? After all...”

After all...

“That too is an important part of being Musashi’s Vice Chancellor.”

“If Futayo joined a dojo somewhere, it would be easier for me to deal with. She

has a personal contract with our shrine, but she doesn't have the divine protection provided by a dojo contract."

Masazumi listened to Asama in a shaking, elevated place.

That place was atop a hand. Specifically, Jizuri Suzaku's right hand. They were on their way to the materials collapse where Neshinbara had gone missing. Or that was the plan, but...

...I-it's really shaking!!

In addition to shaking up and down like it was going to throw her off, it was shaking left and right too. Masazumi had only avoided falling off by clinging to Jizuri Suzaku's single raised finger (the middle one), but...

"Maa."

Tsukinowa seems happy, so this is actually kind of an enjoyable attraction, she thought. Still, it's a little too dangerous for the owner.

With her arms wrapped around Suzaku's middle finger, Masazumi looked back toward Asama who sat on the wrist.

"Y-you're not having any trouble, Asama?"

"Eh? With what?"

...Is it because her body has more ballast!? No, now that I think about it, she can ride on Persona-kun's shoulder just fine too. ...Wait, that doesn't disprove the ballast theory at all! Wait, wait. Now that I think about it even more, Mitotsudaira rode on this during the Battle of Mikawa. That must mean it's just my utter lack of athletic ability. So that's it. Hmm.

She then asked about something she had noticed.

"Naomasa, why is everyone on the road running away from us?"

"What?" Naomasa gave a quiet snort of laughter from Suzaku's shoulder.

"Now. You all had better speed up, or you're in trouble."

As he worked at a construction site, Noriki watched Jizuri Suzaku in the distance and opened his intro-style portable shrine.

Laborer: Hey, is anyone there? The Suzaku has been walking around threatening people with its middle finger raised, so did something upset Naomasa?"

Flat Vassal: "Ohh, maybe she didn't like that she was never mentioned during that awful conversation despite being an elder sister character."

Laborer: "If you understand it, then you deal with it."

Flat Vassal: "Oh, judge, understood. 6th Special Duty Officer..."

<Calling: confirmed. Response: confirmed.>

Smoking Girl: "Yeah? What is it?"

Flat Vassal: "Judge. ...You want to be treated as a part of the elder sister genre too, don't you!?"

Smoking Girl: "Hey, someone get Adele to a good brain doctor."

Flat Vassal: "Wh-why would you jump to that conclusion!?"

Asama: "But Adele, you have taken a lot of blows to the head lately, so it's okay if you've gone crazy. We all understand."

Flat Vassal: "Huh? Huh? I feel like I'm being treated nicely in the worst possible way."

Why are all of their conversations so weird? wondered Masazumi as Jizuri Suzaku came to a stop.

They had arrived at the scene.

That materials yard was located between Okutama and Musashino and the Musashi's replacement armor panels were piled up there.

"It feels weird for them to be stacked up higher than a god of war."

"That's because the work can only be done inside the dock. They had about as many replacement parts stacked up alongside the dock at IZUMO too."

"I see."

Even as the Vice President, Masazumi felt she still had a lot to learn about

Musashi and its surroundings.

The metal hand below her feet and the metal finger between her arms both trembled. Jizuri Suzaku was lowering its hand to the floor.

“Masazumi, we’re heading down.”

Asama took her hand and helped her stand up. That was likely to help her with the unfamiliar footing, so Masazumi did not resist the urge to place a hand on Asama’s shoulder while trying to keep anyone else from noticing.

“Thanks.”

“Think nothing of it.”

Asama smiled and so did Masazumi when she saw Hanami greet Tsukinowa. And by the time Jizuri Suzaku’s arm reached the dimly-lit floor...

“Oh, Masazumi-dono...and Asama-dono too. Naruze-dono and the others are performing the inspection over there.”

Having arrived ahead of them, Crossunit pointed deeper in to direct them. A valley between the piled-up materials created something of a passageway, and...

“What is this?”

It looked to Masazumi like a mountain of papers had collapsed. It was so large that she could not keep her eyes off of it as Asama took her hand and helped her to the floor.

...So this is the materials collapse.

Giant armor panels were stacked up so high she could not see the top. Some had shifted out of place, some had fallen, some had tilted, and some were standing on end in a group.

The worst of the collapse was the mountain near them. The center of the pile had shifted port to form a sideways “V” shape and knocked over the neighboring pile.

“What could have caused that?”

A male voice answered her. It came from a middle-aged man in a lab coat.

“One theory is that the joints in the floor became temporarily disconnected,

but I can't agree with that. ...Oh, long time no see. I'm Kantou IZUMO Representative Mishina Shouichi. ...I'm glad I could introduce myself like this."

He placed a hand on his head and gave a quick bow.

"Thank you for taking such good care of my Hiro."

"Now, then."

Masazumi saw Shouichi gesture toward the collapse.

"I don't want to just stand around here, so how about we hurry up and get on with the inspection? Either way, we need to take this seriously to ensure everyone's safety in the future. After all..."

"Judge. I'd heard. There were injuries, weren't there?"

"Judge."

He nodded and brought out his sword-shaped Mouse. Asama also nodded and brought out Hanami who exchanged a few sign frames with the sword.

<Connection: confirmed>

Asama: "Okay, I have prepared an exclusive data area for you, representative. Only those involved in the inspection can access the conversation."

Vice President: "Tell us."

481: "There were six injuries. Five of them were guards caught in the collapse while out on patrol, but..."

Vice President: "But?"

Mal-Ga: "Judge. One of the injuries was from a sword. Tenzou checked and confirmed it. For the time being, we've told the PR Committee they were 'caught in the collapse'."

481: "Oh, you stole my line."

Mal-Ga: "You should be thankful all I did was steal it. With my skill, I can rewrite your lines into shameful cries."

10ZO: "Leave it to Naruze-dono to make something like that sound cool."

This has devolved into chaos, thought Masazumi while watching Tsukinowa tilt its head on her shoulder.

“Can we see the scene?”

“Judge. We’ve gotten it accessible. This way.”

Shouichi and Tenzou faced the moving gods of war and workers. There were also some guards and some others watching curiously from a distance. Masazumi began walking while watching the working people and listening to the questioning voices.

...Would you look at that.

When something happens, it really gathers attention, she thought while making her way to the scene.

Chapter 15: Observer at the Site of Collapse

第十五章

『崩れ場所の観測者』



何があったと
問うてみる言葉
確認する動作
配点 (探せ)

This is the action

Of asking

What happened

Point Allocation (Search)

By the time Masazumi arrived at the site of the collapse, some others were already there.

Naruze was drawing diagrams to record the situation and Naito was in charge of information regarding materials transportation. Also...

“The Tachibana couple is here too?”

“Judge.”

Crossunite, who was acting as guide and guard, nodded and pointed to the two people standing about five meters up on the collapsed materials.

“The two of them can work in elevated areas, so they are providing some help.”

Masazumi knew what he meant by “some help”. If the guards’ injuries were from a blade, the Tachibana couple could determine what technique was used in the attack. And if it did come down to a fight with the hidden culprit, those two could make it back alive.

...I’m grateful, but this is a troublesome situation.

To help the people relax and to make it look like the central individuals were hard at work, it was crucial they immediately appeared on the scene of the accident and dealt with the problem.

...But me being here only restrains Crossunite and the others.

They hold official positions, so they’re not normal students like Asa-

“Hm? What’s the matter, Masazumi?” asked Asama. “Why are you staring at me?”

“Oh, um, I was just thinking about our standards for ‘normal’.”

Come to think of it, we also have Azuma who's a former imperial, Noriki is a former Houjou, I'm beginning to suspect Persona-kun is from Mouri, the Aoi sister says a lot of strange things, Hassan can battle warships, Ohiroshiki is out of the question, and Balfette is solid. Oh, I know. There's Mukai! No, wait. She's in charge of moving the Musashi. Does that mean our class's relatively normal members are the incubus and the slime? We're hopeless.

...There's not a single normal person around me!

She started to fear this was a dangerous place for her to be during the sensitive time period when her personality was forming, but that also helped her understand how Asama and the others had turned out how they did. That did not ease her fears about herself, though.

"Anyway, please check over everything. It looks like you're prioritizing the recovery, but how is the inspection going?"

"Judge," replied the Tachibana husband up top. "We too would like to work on recovering the scene. We want to see the passageway."

"Are there any signs of what happened up there?" asked Crossunite.

"Judge." The Tachibana wife nodded and used a false arm to lift the top layer of collapsed materials. "The distortion began at one end and continued through to the opposite end. And from what I can see, the collapse began as a natural collapse but then the materials received an impact lower toward the ground. In other words, the culprit must have moved through the passageway and struck the materials. However..."

"However?"

"Judge. I have a few questions. ...For one, the culprit demonstrated enough skill with a sword or other blade to cut down the guards, but they also created enough of an impact to knock away these stacked materials. Who on Musashi has both of those skills?"

"...Someone with sword-fighting skills and the ability to make a solid impact?"

"Judge. Exactly. Where do you think we could find someone like that?"

Everyone slowly exchanged a glance.

“...”

They then looked back up at the Tachibana wife.

After a while, Crossunite averted his gaze.

“I-it is true that not many people are skilled in both sword-fighting and solid impacts. Y-yes, not many people at all! Yes!”

“Crossunite, you don’t need to speak for all of us.”

Masazumi cleared her throat to gather attention.

...I need to sum up everyone’s opinion here.

She looked across them all.

“Judge. The Tachibana wife is correct. This attack would require both a blade and a solid impact, and I do not think anyone on Musashi could-...”

As she spoke, Persona-kun walked past holding a giant machete in one hand and a giant hammer in the other. Ohiroshiki and some others led the way while carrying lumber, but...

“Good evening, hags and gentlemen! We are on our way to improve the earthquake resistance of the elementary school that the children use for shelter during emergencies! But rest easy for we will not be adding any strange modifications! Ah! What seems to be the problem, officers!? Why are you singling me out!? The god of little girls will not allow this! Ahh, I swear that’s not a bugging spell! It merely lets me listen to the metaphorical whisperings of the garden’s flowers! ...Hey, where do you think you’re taking me!?”

After waving to Ohiroshiki as the boy was arrested, Persona-kun bowed toward Masazumi’s group and continued on toward Musashino. Mishina Shouichi gave a comment as he watched Persona-kun leave.

“...I’m pretty sure he could do both of those things.”

“Judge. Yes, I guess the problem is that people who can do both of those things are plentiful in Musashi.”

Mal-Ga: “You don’t have to force a smile while you say that.”

That’s a politician’s job, she silently complained before looking back up at the

Tachibana couple.

“Do you have any guesses as to who did it?”

“Judge. Gin and I both believe a Far Easterner did it.”

“Why?”

“Because the collapsed materials were hit low to the ground. And based on the slashes to the guards. They were all hit from behind with a single strike running from the back to the side. And it was a slicing blow.”

The Tachibana husband opened a sign frame containing a diagram Naruze had sent him. It illustrated the state of the injured guards. They all wore armor and a sword at the waist, but they all had an injury from the back to the side. Some were to the right side and some to the left.

“A Far Eastern sword was used for a horizontal slice. ...Far Eastern swords are generally swung down from above, so it took some skill to pull off this irregular horizontal strike on the guards.”

Futayo walked along a dark pathway on Tama’s aft end.

She held a paper bag of bread under her left arm and the bottle of cocoa was inside as well. She had been told to head home and drink it there, so she had decided to do just that.

The aroma from the bag was enough to satisfy her a little.

“Yes.”

This is the kind of air I want to breathe, she thought with her eyebrows tensed.

When she looked to the back of Musashino, she saw a lit area.

...The materials collapsed there, but it is possible the guards’ injuries were made by an attacker.

She had received a report not from Masazumi but from the Representative Committee that worked under Masazumi.

Masazumi likely did not want to tie up the Student Council and Chancellor’s Officers members for something like that, so the recent reports tended to be

made by the organizations working below them.

...The more personnel involved in the Student Council and Chancellor's Officers work, the more that work will be known to the public.

That was of course something Masazumi had told her. Futayo felt bad for leaving so many decisions to others since arriving in Musashi, so she felt she needed to pay them back in the actual battles she fought against other academies and the intimidation effect she provided as Vice Chancellor.

"Maybe I should stop by the Main Blue Thunder on Musashino."

According to the divine transmissions, the report on the collapse would take place at that Blue Thunder. If everyone was gathering there, she could share the extra bread and say it came from the manager and she could relax with her cocoa.

She also simply felt like relaxing with the others a bit.

...Judge.

With that decision made, she looked to Musashino.

The surface wide block here had been mostly remodeled as a residential area already, but the neighboring wide block was still a large hole.

A few thick rope passageways ran across the open space as temporary pathways, so she chose one as a shortcut to Musashino. She bowed toward the guard at the end and stepped onto the rope passageway.

"Maybe I should hurry."

Futayo spoke to herself as she crossed the three meter wide path created above the thick rope passageway by gravitational control.

The ether field pathway glowed with a pale light and she looked around from there.

...The nighttime inspection work is about to end.

Her surroundings were still dark because the Ariake was still in night mode.

This artificial night was created by turning out the lights. The inspection work

that needed that darkness was primarily on the outer hull, but it also included the living areas like the residential and industrial districts.

For the outer hull, they had to inspect and test the workers themselves who would be performing repairs and other work on the armor at night. For the living areas, they needed to make sure the light spells were functioning.

That was why night would periodically fall inside the Ariake and dawn would follow.

The nighttime inspection work was currently finishing up and everyone was breathing a sigh of relief.

As she looked around from the dark sky, she heard distant sounds and saw the occasional distant light. To her, those immediate signs of rapid work were the representative features of this time period.

“In that case...I need to do my job as well.”

She would visit Musashino’s Main Blue Thunder and exchange information.

...That too is an important job.

She nodded and resumed walking across the rope passageway toward Musashino. Aft was to her left and fore was to her right. As she walked, a sudden question occurred to her.

...Hm...

She tilted her head while looking to the other end of the thick rope passageway.

“Why isn’t there a guard at the passageway exit?”

These bridges were also used to carry important materials, so it was standard to place a single guard at each end. That was why she had passed one when heading out onto the passageway.

“...?”

She turned around and found no one at that entrance point.

No, she could see someone collapsed in the darkness.

...Is that the guard from before?

She immediately decided to leave this place.

She had no real reason. Something like the feel of the air on her skin gave her a vague sensation that something was coming, so she turned back around to hurry across.

“!?”

A silent strike hit her on the left side.

...A gunshot!

There was no doubt in Futayo’s heart. She was certain. Her father and Kazuno had taught her firsthand what the damage from different sorts of attacks felt like.

She was wearing armor, but the force of the impact began at a single point and spread out to her entire body while also permeating her body and leaving through the opposite side. It was undoubtedly a hit from a physical bullet.

Her body grew heavy and, by the time the impact left her, it had taken all of her strength with it.

“Kh...!”

She immediately decided not to ask why she had been shot.

Both the “why” and the “how” were not what mattered at the moment.

...I need to survive!

The shooter was aft of her.

She had been shot as soon as she turned around and pointed her left side toward the stern.

She did not know if a second shot was coming. When the first sniper shot missed, the target would move and prevent a second optimal shot. A skilled sniper would know that, but...

...There are some who can fire homing shots like Asama-dono and Naruze-dono!

If the enemy was on Asama's level...

"————"

I should avoid assuming anything that unreasonable, she honestly thought. If the shooter was on her level, it would not have been a sniper shot. The entire rope passageway would have been blown away.

At any rate, she had no cover on that passageway, so...

"..."

She created cover for herself. She quickly turned and pointed her right half toward the stern.

She stood the Tonbo Spare against the ground as cover to hide her body. By placing her body's central line behind the spear, she could avoid a hit to the vitals. Now she only had to report the danger via sign frame, and...

"...?"

She realized something.

...Someone's here.

The vague wind-like presence had grown more solid.

It seemed to be silently approaching behind her.

What was it? Rather than ask, Futayo reached a conclusion.

...The enemy is behind me!

She took a step on reflex to jump left and thus to the aft edge of the narrow passageway. She still held the paper bag under her left arm, but she held the Tonbo Spare in her right hand. The spear would function better as a shield than the bag.

By approaching the left side of the rope passageway, the enemy would only be able to attack her right side.

She concluded that she only needed to avoid the attacks to her right side.

"...!"

She saw the enemy to her left as they attacked from behind.

They had apparently been unable to follow her step to the left. They wore a hooded cloak and rapidly braked after attacking the spot she had just vacated.

...Who are they!?

She did not know. At the very least, she had no memory of this opponent. However, she did recognize their movements. Despite messing up their attack, they recovered with nimble footwork.

...A ninja?

She could not be certain, but achieving that level of control without producing any footsteps was not a warrior's technique. Also...

“————”

The hooded figure vanished.

No, their footwork had led into a step right into her blind spot.

Futayo guessed they were behind her and started to turn around, but...

...No!?

She felt a faint wind-like presence and stopped turning around.

She faced forward. This check would be suicidal if the enemy really was behind her, but the enemy was in front of her after all.

They had circled in front of her rather than behind.

“Kh.”

More than the fact that she had sensed correctly, Futayo gasped at the fact that the enemy who had circled behind her was now in front of her.

The enemy was lowered down almost to a crawl and had their sword drawn to the right side.

...What is this?

How and when had they circled in front of her?

She understood the theory. She had turned around to follow the enemy. Predicting that she would sweep her gaze horizontally to the back, the enemy

had slipped below her horizontally moving gaze.

It made sense when explained step by step, but actually pulling it off would be incredibly difficult.

It was not the technique of a warrior.

It was a ninja's assassination technique.

Meanwhile, Futayo was a warrior. She felt their close proximity gave her enemy the advantage, so...

“———”

She took a quick back step.

The enemy lunged toward her while standing back up.

And in the instant the space between them shrank again...

“Sorry!!”

Futayo apologized to the manager in her heart as she threw the paper bag toward the enemy's face.

She was blocking their vision to stop their charge. More than the bread, the bamboo bottle inside would likely act as a decent obstacle. After all...

...It was probably that bottle that took the previous sniper shot.

She felt pain in her left side, but she had not received a gunshot wound. Instead, she could see something dark staining the bottom of the paper bag. That was likely the cocoa spilled after the bottle broke. It was a real shame.

Then she took action.

She was worried about the sniper to the right, so she held her spear vertically while taking another back step. At the very least, she had to keep the spear shield in place until she left the sniper's line of fire.

“...!?”

As soon as she jumped back, something shot by left to right in front of her eyes.

It took her a moment to realize it was a bullet. After all, the previous sniper

shot had come from the aft to her right, yet this one came from...

...The fore on the left!?

Did that mean there were two snipers?

She had no way of answering that question and the enemy in front of her reacted to the thrown bag.

The hooded figure placed their empty hand on the airborne bag.

“———”

They gave a hard shove to push it back toward Futayo.

Oh, no, thought Futayo.

She had predicted the enemy would either slice through or brush aside the bag, but they had overturned that assumption.

And that was why she was caught off guard.

The preparatory move she had taken against the enemy had been sent right back at her.

It flew straight toward her face, blocking her vision.

The question “what should I do?” entered her heart for the first time in the battle, so...

...Oh, no!

This was no time to be thinking that, but it was clear her carelessness and negligence had made the situation two or three times worse.

She briefly realized how foolish she was.

“Kh.”

She could not use her spear with it held as a shield to her right, so she prepared to swipe it aside with her left hand.

“...Kh!”

A sniper shot had come from the left as well. That meant it would be

dangerous to leave her left side unguarded. A single shot could easily make its way to her heart.

In that case, she thought as she took another back step.

...I need to dodge!

Just as she lowered her body a little, something happened to the paper bag in front of her.

It and everything inside it was torn in two.

She knew the enemy had sliced through it, but the direction of the cut was odd.

The bag had been sliced from her side toward the enemy's side.

Impossible, she felt. If they used their blade, it should have started on their side.

But instead, it opened wide on her side as if it were about to embrace her.

“————”

The contents of the bag spread out over her lowered head.

The bread scattered and the bamboo bottle split apart while scattering its contents.

Futayo was distracted by that movement.

In an instant, she felt a chilly presence on her throat.

Then she saw the hooded figure in a nearly crawling stance below the scattering bag and right in front of her lowered gaze.

...Oh, no!

She bemoaned her actions yet again but still tried to take a third back step.

As she did, a figure appeared behind her on the right.

This was not the enemy in front of her.

A second enemy was circling around her from behind.

Another one? thought Futayo.

This additional enemy also seemed to like hiding in her blind spot. This figure moving behind her right shoulder was small.

However, the second enemy also held a weapon.

“A hammer!?”

After that, the enemy gave a shout of their own in a female voice.

“You need to get some sleep!”

The enemy swung their weapon.

“—————”

At first, she felt wind. The air pushed by the hammer became a wind of swollen pressure.

The warm wind initially pushed in from the right, but...

...Here it comes!

A solid mass tore through that wind. The impact was even larger than the hammer itself and she could see it approaching in the movement of the air.

This was a striking divine weapon. And...

“It’s silent!?”

It was likely meant for assassinations.

It was going to hit her and a different sort of impact from the sniper shot was going to permeate her entire body.

Faced with that, Futayo did not hesitate.

“Kh...ah!”

Just before the enemy got in a clean hit and just before the strike landed on her body, she jumped. Instead of evading, she was altogether avoiding the enemy’s attack.

She threw herself off the rope passageway.

She threw herself into the empty darkness there.

...Where can I land...?

As her consciousness faded from the lingering effects of the partial blow, her body followed suit by sinking into the depths of the darkness.

“You’re saying it’s possible Neshinbara was caught in the collapse?”

Masazumi spoke to an underclassman who had arrived at the inspection scene.

Her question was directed at Ookubo, a second year and the head of the Representative Committee. The girl placed her hand on the two swords at her waist and she nodded toward Kanou, the automaton standing next to her.

“Do not worry, milady,” said Kanou. “The situation here has been settled.”

She must have been making sure it was safe. Kanou then bowed toward Masazumi.

“We had assumed the Secretary had attended the meeting you were holding, but based on the report we received on the meeting with the Date clan, he was not present. We were just on our way to ask about that. We had assumed he had attended the meeting you were holding, but based on the report we-...”

“Kanou-kun. Don’t get stuck in a loop.”

“My apologies. I was giving priority to sorting through my logic.”

...Even Musashi’s second year students are weird...

Masazumi thought that with a slight fake smile, her standard expression when interacting with underclassmen, and she shook her head. She then asked a question of Crossunite who was telling the gods of war which materials to transport.

“We haven’t found a body, right?”

“Judge.”

She received an affirmative from both Crossunite and the Tachibana wife who was lifting up each of the collapsed armor panels to check beneath.

She was accurately clearing out the collapsed materials on the instructions of

her husband who was standing at the top of those unstable materials with ease, but...

“We have yet to find the Musashi Secretary’s corpse. Yes, we *still* haven’t found it. What a pain. I want to find it as soon as possible, get back home, and prepare a bath for Master Muneshige.”

“Tachibana Wife, I think you were supposed to leave that second half unsaid...”

However, she had already lifted up most of the collapsed materials and leaned them up against the surrounding stacks. That had revealed the floor so they could investigate the cause of the collapse.

In the gap between the materials leaning against the “walls” on either side, a father and son were investigating the floor. One was Mishina Shouichi in his lab coat and the other...

“Old Man Taizou, how’s it going?”

Naomasa spoke from Jizuri Suzaku’s shoulder as the god of war held the materials in place lest they cause another collapse. Taizou slowly stood up in his hat that bore the number plate of the engine division’s leader.

“That Tachibana youth up there was right. This collapse wasn’t caused by a problem with the floor. It started as a natural collapse and then something hit it from the side.”

“Right, right.” Shouichi stood up next to the older man. “I was thinking the same thing, dad.”

“What?” Taizou glared up at Shouichi’s face. “Who ever said you could call me ‘dad’, you brat. Just because my wife felt she had to adopt you into the family doesn’t mean I’ve accepted it.”

“Oh? Are you sure about that, dad? You have me to thank for Hiro. Without me, you never would have met her. Now can you deny my importance?”

“Hiro was given to my daughter by god. *You* had nothing to do with it.”

“Wh-what are you talking about!? Hiro is the result of all my and my wife’s efforts!”

“What? If it takes you that much effort, how about I give you some forceful

modifications? Hm? And does that mean you're the one interfering with me and my wife's daily wishes to see a second grandkid!?"

Vice President: "...What an awful conversation."

Smoking Girl: "Really? It's always like this in the engine division."

Gold Mar: "Yay! Seijun's super pure!"

...Why does it feel so frustrating to be called that? Then again, it is kind of refreshing to see Ookubo blushing at this.

At any rate, Asama casually moved in from the side.

Asama: "Masazumi. Look at this."

Masazumi checked the information Asama sent.

Vice President: "Futayo was injured...and has gone missing?"

Chapter 16: Fabricator at the Site of Collapse

第十六章

『崩し場所の捏造屋』



何かあるよと
思ってみる内心
作り出す手法
配点 (ガセ)

What method is used

To create a mentality

That assumes there's something there?

Point Allocation (Lies)

At the scene of the collapse, Asama and the others viewed the information from her father while the workers and gods of war audibly operated around them.

...Futayo was attacked?

The answer to her question was displayed on the sign frame before her eyes.

“What is this?”

It was the message board from the PR Committee's divine website. One of the threads created by a reader contained an image supposedly taken from a stationary security camera.

It showed someone falling backwards from one of Tama's thick rope passageways.

It was from just a few minutes earlier. Since it was night, the image was dark and the colors were hard to make out.

However, the falling figure had a ponytail on their head and a spear in their right hand. There were also some posts from witnesses saying they had seen Futayo walking around there.

The area below was a nature district that contained a waterway. The posts were wondering if an emergency search was necessary.

A thought came to Asama's mind as she watched the thread.

...I wonder.

She tried asking her question.

Asama: “Um, why does it say she was attacked?”

Marube-ya: “If you remember doing it, confess right this instant!!”

Righteousness: “It would be a miracle if someone actually raised their hand

after that.”

Yes, but you can never underestimate Musashi because sometimes those miracles happen. Yoshy’s still a novice.

10ZO: “The person who uploaded the image suspected that she had been shot. That is an easy theory to latch onto during discussions, so it’s being treated as the truth now.”

Tachibana Wife: “How arrogant of them. Besides, the way she’s being knocked away could not have been done with a gunshot. She was hit with a much larger surface.”

Asama was impressed by that analysis, but that also meant the individual in the image really had been attacked. And...

Vice President: “Hold on. I’m going to try contacting Futayo. We might be getting worked up over nothing.”

Asama: “Yes, please do. With Neshinbara-kun squished flat, we would be in trouble if something happened to Futayo too.”

Mal-Ga: “You can say some amazing things sometimes... But in all seriousness, this could affect Futayo’s reputation as well as the Chancellor’s Officers’. For some information warfare, I’m going to send out a dummy image to confuse the situation.”

Asama saw Naruze sit down on a hemp rope cable passing by overhead.

She opened a crop mark frame Magie Figur and Naito sat next to her to help.

Mal-Ga: “I’ll prepare the image using the existing one, so Asama, you tell your father I want to use the Asama Shrine’s divine transmission authority to untraceably upload it.”

Asama: “Why do I feel like our shrine is turning into one of the shadiest ones in history?”

Mal-Ga: “What’s wrong with that? It’s convenient for me. ...Anyway, is there anyone around here I can use as a model? Ohiroshiki? Yes, you’ll do perfectly.”

From her elevated position, Naruze spoke to Ohiroshiki as he walked over.

“Hey, Ohiroshiki. Were you released from the guard station? That’s perfect, so stand right there. Judge. Now look up a little, bend backwards, and... What, you can’t bend backwards? And you call yourself a living creature?”

“Th-this black-winged hag is being mean! And you weren’t a hag ten years ago!”

“Shut up. If it were ten years ago, I would have fried you to cinders for that.”

She stopped the hand holding her pen and closed the Magie Figur.

The image was complete, so she sent it to Asama.

“That should do nicely. Ohiroshiki, aren’t you glad even you could contribute a little to the Student Council’s work?”

“I’m not sure what just happened, but I have a very bad feeling about it...”

Asama looked at the image Naruze had sent her.

It showed the rope passageway crossing the open area in Tama, and...

Asama: “Wow. Futayo is performing a backdrop throw on Ohiroshiki-kun.”

Vice President: “Eh? Isn’t this that other image...? Ehhh!?”

Mal-Ga: “Image modifications are a standard skill. Even in the history recreations, the frescoes and paintings in cathedrals are being redrawn. ...Of course, it might have been better to have Ohiroshiki falling a little more head-first. For a pedophile, you’re awful at leaning back.”

Worshipper: “Um, are pedophiles known for leaning back?”

Mal-Ga: “Heh. Well, you certainly aren’t.”

Gold Mar: “You’re having a lot of surprisingly manly moments lately, Ga-chan!!”

They never change, do they? thought Asama, but she did get what Naruze was doing. She wanted to spread that image on the divine network to drown out the rumors of Futayo being injured.

Mal-Ga: “Neshinbara would probably go at it with his own posts, but this is where my skills lie. I’ll send you a few different versions, so send those out too.”

10ZO: “Thank you very much. I’m only any good at the gathering and analysis side.”

Mal-Ga: “Then go ‘gather’ me a drink. I’ll take Mogami peach nectar.”

As Masazumi operated a sign frame, she gestured for Tenzou to get going and the ninja immediately vanished. Meanwhile, Asama sent Naruze’s request to her father.

Asama Dad: “I’ll do it! Your dad will do his very best! Being young sure is great!”

Fine, dad, but do you really have to choose a name based on your relationship to me?

“Oh, it’s already started...”

Asama Dad: “I did it! Your dad did his very best! Maybe I’m young too!”

Everyone glared at Asama as she sent a random response back to her father. She made sure to at least thank him and tell him to get to bed early.

But during all this behind-the-scenes work, the two underclassmen connected to the Student Council were left tilting their heads.

Suddenly, the automaton named Kanou moved.

“Milady.”

She tapped on the glasses-wearing Ookubo’s shoulder and showed her a sign frame.

Ookubo’s expression changed. First her eyebrows rose in surprise and then they wrinkled in doubt.

Most likely, it was the same information the others were seeing. Based on her expressions, she was surprised and then doubtful that Futayo was injured. But...

...?

Huh? thought Asama.

...Something seems off about that girl. But what?

Asama was unsure what her question was even directed at, but she knew something about that obvious reaction was not quite right. For some reason, it did not seem appropriate.

...I wonder why not.

Asama decided to keep it in a corner of her mind and then Ookubo turned to face her. The girl inhaled and spoke as if she had made up her mind about something.

“Um, I just received word that the Vice Chancellor is in trouble...”

“Yes, she apparently threw Ohiroshiki-kun into the abyss with a backdrop. That’s honestly pretty normal for us. ...Although it is unusual for Futayo to do it herself.”

When Asama responded with a smile, Ookubo’s eyebrows rose and she stared straight at Asama.

“This is no time for jokes!”

“But, Ookubo, that’s exactly the information I have right here. ...Is there some kind of problem with that?”

Masazumi quickly showed Ookubo a sign frame displaying the data Asama’s father had uploaded. When Ookubo saw it, her eyebrows rose again and finally...

“I could have sworn I saw the victim walking through here just a moment ago...”

She lowered her shoulders in a sigh. She had likely decided it was no use arguing.

And when Asama saw that...

...Yes.

There was nothing off about that.

Then what had seemed off before?

But before she could answer her question, a report came in from Tenzou. And it was not to tell him he had bought the drink.

10ZO: “Masazumi-dono, I have moved an appropriate distance from the scene and have detected no one in pursuit.”

...I see.

They wanted to check on the scene to find out what had happened to Futayo, but there might be an attacker. That was why they had sent Tenzou out on the pretext of buying a drink.

10ZO: “What should I do? If Futayo-dono did fall, I can predict fairly accurately where. Should I hurry there?”

Vice President: “No, that won’t be necessary. Go to the Blue Thunder. Not the main one, but the one I often collapse in front of due to hunger.”

Silver Wolf: “Couldn’t you just call it the one Horizon works at?”

Masazumi waved a dismissive hand even though Mitotsudaira was not there and then she faced Ookubo. Her expression was perfectly normal except for her slightly raised eyebrows.

“About the Vice Chancellor, Ookubo.”

“Judge. Is she okay?”

“Well.” Masazumi tilted her head. “More than okay, she hasn’t even left the Blue Thunder.”

Masazumi spoke to Asama and Naruze who looked confused.

Vice President: “Yes, I just received a divine mail from the manager, who apparently noticed the commotion on the divine network. Futayo hasn’t noticed, though, because she’s been sleeping in her seat.”

10ZO: “Huh? Then my trip to the Blue Thunder is for nothing?”

Mal-Ga: “What a worthless ninja.”

10ZO: “And who was it that told me to go there!? Who was it!?”

Vice President: “I don’t mind, so stop by there anyway. The manager is sending me some live footage, but if the 1st Special Duty Officer confirms it, no one will doubt it. To be honest, checking in person is most effective for this kind of thing.”

After Crossunit sent back a “judge”, Masazumi took a breath.

...All sorts of weird things are happening tonight.

She then noticed the two underclassmen looking her way, so she opened a sign frame.

Tsukinowa pushed it forward with his front legs to show Ookubo the footage of Futayo sleeping in her seat at the Blue Thunder.

“This is a live video. ...According to the Blue Thunder’s manager, she fell asleep after eating a light meal. I’ve requested that the manager ask her whether she will meet up with us or-...”

Just as she was about to say “not”, the Tachibana Husband shouted down as he instructed the surrounding gods of war what materials to move. His eyebrows rose as he looked at the armor panel Gin had picked up to carry.

“Gin! Please check that armor panel!”

He jumped down and shouted Masazumi’s way.

“I’ve found what we were looking for!”

Futayo felt her body collapsing from exhaustion.

...Nh!

She could tell she had been sleeping. She had clearly been careless, but when she opened her eyes...

“...Nh?”

The scenery around her and her position were not what she had expected. The last thing she remembered was being attacked on the rope passageway and being knocked into the air, but now she was in...

...The Blue Thunder?

“Oh, are you awake, Futayo-chan?”

“Eh?”

She turned toward the voice on her right and found the manager. *She does somewhat resemble Kimi-dono*, she thought. *I don't know about the nudist, though.*

At any rate...

...*Huh?*

Something was not right. She knew she had left here and started toward Musashino, but then she had been attacked and...

“Shot...”

She had been hit by sniper fire on her left side. She remembered the paper bag acting as a shield, but the impact had still reached her side. She used her fingernails to open her inner suit's stomach joint and peered in at her left side.

But...

...*There's nothing there?*

Not only did she not have a wound, she did not even have a bruise. The manager smiled bitterly next to her.

“Is your back hurting you after hitting it during training? I did use this on you while you were sleeping, but maybe it wasn't enough.”

The manager held up a Shinto healing spell charm. It helped improve blood flow and Futayo could feel her exhaustion leaving her.

“I was asleep?”

“You must have been done in by the aroma from this.”

The manager placed a bamboo bottle in front of her. It gave off the aroma of cocoa.

“It got cold while you were asleep, so I got you some more.”

She lightly tapped the bamboo bottle and a strong smell of roasted sweetness wafted out.

“...Thank you very much.”

There was also some wrapped bread on the table. Futayo felt a little stiff, but that may have been from sleeping in the chair. Sleeping here would get in the way of business, so she decided she needed to leave.

Then the manager spoke with a smile.

“Masazumi-san sent a divine mail earlier asking if you were here. I said you were asleep, but what do you want to do? They’re all on Musahino’s stern apparently.”

What should I do? she wondered for a moment.

“I was thinking of taking action on a different issue tomorrow, so I think I will only stop by briefly so I can get home early to sleep. If I joined the others for long, I would get dragged into staying up all night.”

“Oh, dear. Those children are quite the delinquents. ...So what is this ‘different issue’?”

“Finding a teacher.”

If that incident on the rope passageway was a dream, then it must have been a sort of revelation, she thought. My mind was admonishing me for my previous loss and for allowing Tonbokiri to be damaged.

She knew she had to fire herself up again, so...

“I am thinking of learning to be a brand new person.”

“Very good. That’s what it means to be a samurai. My husband was originally a student who left Satomi to train in IZUMO. When traveling around the Far East, we even walked around down below here.”

The Manager put her hand on her hip and smiled, so Futayo nodded.

“I think I will try working harder too.”

Futayo realized that the idea of finding a teacher had really worked its way into her heart.

That dream seemed to have been meaningful. She understood without being told that she was lacking something and that she was inexperienced. But...

...I have not reached the level where that understanding feels like a good thing.

Still, she had something to do. She still had something she could do, something she thought she should do, and something that would change things if she did it.

She was not entirely sure what exactly it would change. It could be her abilities, her equipment, her relationships, or even just her feelings.

“That’s right.”

She nodded to confirm that to herself and then she looked up at the manager.

“I will begin searching for a teacher early tomorrow morning.”

“Oh, dear. Then you had better get home to sleep before long. And if you keep up that-...huh?”

A sign frame appeared next to the manager. It displayed Masazumi.

“What is it, Masazumi-san?”

“Eh? Oh, is Futayo there?”

“Hm?” said Futayo. “I was planning to get home early so I could get plenty of sleep.”

“Eh? Then at least listen to what I have to say. ...We found Neshinbara and he definitely was caught in the materials collapse. For the time being, we’re carrying him to the Aoi home - that’s your home, manager – since we’re all gathering there anyway. Futayo, Crossunite is on his way to meet you and confirm you’re alive. After that, please stop by if you have the time.”

After all...

“You’ll probably get to see a strange Neshinbara.”

Chapter 17: Blackboard Boy in Front of the Meeting Place

第十七章

『会議場前の板書男』



イメージチェンジの
意味とは
配点（人騒がせ）

What is the meaning

Of an image change?

Point Allocation (Causing Trouble)

“This is the armor panel in question.”

Everyone looked at the armor panel Gin had carried to the front of the Main Blue Thunder.

It was ten centimeters thick, five meters tall and wide, and meant for the Musashi’s outer hull. In front of the café that was the Aoi home, Horizon, Mitotsudaira, and the crossdresser viewed the giant piece of artwork.

“At first glance, it looks like a normal armor panel.”

“Judge. If you ignore the one part that is meaninglessly abnormal,” added Horizon.

Something was printed on the bottom of the standing armor panel’s front surface.

“That is Neshinbara-dono.”

Just as Tenzou, who had returned from Tama’s Blue Thunder ahead of Futayo, suggested, Neshinbara was printed on the armor with his arms and legs held out to the side and bent. However...

“The design is fairly off.”

As Naruze inspected it while sitting on the upper edge, she pointed out that the image looked more like a comic than a photograph. But she said more while kicking the armor with her heel.

“This thing’s alive. He probably used a Michizane-style text spell to have himself ‘squished flat’ like this rather than realistically. ...What do you think, Asama?”

“Yes. I tried touching it and it has faint body heat. There are Shinto spells for sealing someone in a paper image, so I think he temporarily sealed himself inside using a text description spell. However, he probably put the spell together on the

fly.”

Asama tilted her head and crossed her arms.

“Hmm. Neshinbara-kun is a fairly powerful spell user, so this is could be a lot of trouble. When he came up with the idea, I bet he got all excited at how much of a genius he thought he was and cast the spell on himself at full-power.”

“Asama-san, so what exactly happened to the Secretary?”

“Well, Adele, he was squished flat.”

“Oh?” said Adele before Horizon placed a hand on her shoulder.

“I believe we could start calling him Flat Neshinbara-sama.”

Adele looked to the side with a silent smile and Yoshiyasu glared back at her.

“Miss Vassal, stop looking to me when you want someone to redirect their words onto. And I’m not sure I entirely understand, but is this similar to when someone combines with a god of war?”

“That would probably be the best explanation for a god of war pilot like you. Basically, he transformed himself into information, burned it onto the armor as a pattern, and then applied defenses.”

“Hmm.”

The nudist crouched in front of Neshinbara and started slapping at his crotch.

“Heyyy! Come on ouuuuut!”

Horizon kicked the nudist right into the armor. The sound of flesh and bone rang out, the armor shook, and Naruze fell backwards from the top. Everyone cried out in surprise and Horizon commented while still in her kicking pose.

“I see. Asama-sama was correct. That did not even scratch it.”

She gave Asama a thumbs up and then nodded again.

“Asama-sama has gained three trust points.”

“U-umm...”

As dull sweat poured down Asama’s face, the nudist peeled himself off the armor and recovered.

“H-hey, Horizon? Don’t you think you can be too blunt at times?”

“What is wrong with being direct? Now, Toori-sama, I have something to discuss with you behind here.”

“Eh!? Wh-what is it!? A hidden kiss!? Something like that!?”

Horizon calmly circled behind the armor panel and the nudist excitedly followed.

Just as everyone started feeling worried, they heard the deafening noise of the nudist slamming into the back of the armor panel.

Horizon quickly circled back around.

“It seems an indirect hit from the back is not enough to knock him out of there either. Now that the Ikyuu Method has failed, I can only determine that we should give up.”

“H-hold on, Horizon! It’s too soon to give up!”

“Judge. I understand, Mitotsudaira-sama. You wish to work off your frustrations after consuming so much pizza and meat by letting this armor panel absorb your destructive blows, don’t you?”

Horizon snapped her fingers and a lift rose in the center of the bow’s long block. It contained Adele’s mobile shell and Shouichi in the pose of a merchant introducing his wares.

Horizon waved to Shouichi.

“Now, I have used my authority as Vicereine to prepare Musashi’s greatest physical shell, so enjoy hitting Neshinbara-sama from either the front or the back. Now, now. Give it your best shot.”

“Umm... Should I really be doing that with Adele’s mobile shell?”

“5th Special Duty Officer, does that mean you want to do it if I’m okay with it?”

“No, um, Chancellor? What do you think?”

“Think he’d be back to normal in three minutes if we soaked it in hot water?”

Horizon snapped her fingers and a lift rose in the center of the bow’s long

block. It contained a pot of boiling water with a four meter radius and Ohiroshiki in the pose of a merchant introducing his wares.

Horizon waved to Ohiroshiki.

“Now, there is a slight margin of error, but I have used my authority as Vicereine to prepare an udon boiling pot from the cafeteria. Toori-sama, you take a dip first.”

“Wait, wait, wait. Are you trying to kill me!?”

“Oh? It seems like a decent way of disinfecting your dick. By eliminating the root cause.”

“Um, Horizon? More importantly, won’t boiling it cause the paint to come off?”

“Mito, that isn’t paint. It’s technically Neshinbara-kun himself.”

Everyone in Class 3-Plum began giving their opinion, but two people three steps away were at a complete loss for words: Ookubo and Kanou.

...What in the world is going on?

Ookubo realized just how squarely in the “normal” category of humanity she fell.

She had been watching these upperclassmen from a distance for a while and she had thought the heir to the Asama Shrine was relatively normal, but...

“I am glad Neshinbara-kun wasn’t crushed. I really was worried. I’ve seen far too many scenes like that in monster rape porn games lately.”

For some reason, phrases like “I messed up!” or “Now I’ve done it!” appeared in Ookubo’s mind, but she resolutely ignored them all. She had something else to say here.

“Vice President, what should we do now that-...”

“Eh? Oh, the inspection’s over, so you can leave. We have a lot to go over amongst ourselves.”

“No, I was asking what we should do about the attack at the materials yard.”

“Judge.” The ninja 1st Special Duty Officer stepped forward and bowed. “The Vice Chancellor aides intend to examine the situation and use that information to put together a search team. Security measures come first, but I think we should ignore the materials yards from now on.”

“You’re going to leave the site of the attack unguarded?”

“That should not matter as long as no important personnel travel through them. Those labyrinthine areas require a great number of guards, but it seems more efficient to simply have bodyguards for the important personnel themselves.”

...He’s fairly normal at least.

What he said made sense. This attack had targeted the Secretary, so they could protect important personnel like that instead of the specific location. But...

“What if the attacker was trying to get us to-...”

“Glasses Committee Leader-dono.”

Maybe he isn’t so normal, thought Ookubo. She could hear someone behind him saying “Add on ‘phony Kansai dialect’ too!”, but she ignored that.

She did want to hear what he had to say, but first...

“The ‘glasses’ part was not necessary.”

She heard a few “Ehh?” reactions, but she ignored those as well. And...

“Was there something wrong with what I said?”

“Well, it wasn’t exactly wrong,” said the 1st Special Duty Officer. “But we still don’t know for sure there was an ‘attacker’.”

“———”

That’s true, thought Ookubo as the 1st Special Duty Officer said more in front of her.

“The mystery is not solved until the arrest is made. It is still possible a variety of elements lined up just right to create an accident that simply looks like an attack.”

So...

"I believe your reading is most likely correct, but we must be prepared for the more unlikely possibilities as well."

"...I see. My apologies."

"No, no. I should apologize. Anyway, I do think I will be asking for some help from the normal students and citizens."

"In what way?"

"The attack occurred in a hidden place, so whoever did it must want to hide. To put it another way, they do not want their identity to be known. In that case..."

"You want everyone to monitor each other?"

"No, no. Nothing as disconcerting as that. And I am sure you do not want that either."

He's being pretty thoughtful. Or maybe he's just good at weaseling out of taking blame.

...That seems soft for the Chancellor's Officers.

Oh, but this ninja is the one who stole a princess from England. He must be so calm because he knows he has the necessary strength when push comes to shove, concluded Ookubo.

In that case, he really was being thoughtful, she also concluded.

"Judge. I was careless in my remarks."

"As was I." The ninja bowed. "Mutual observation will not be necessary. ...I simply think it would be a good idea to place normal students and citizens as gatekeepers at the long block gates. With observers like that, we will know who was in the area of any future attacks and no one will fear their neighbors are monitoring them when we have clear gatekeepers playing that role. So..."

"It would be easiest to give that job to the people who know the area and who works there."

"Judge. For the city areas, I believe normal students would be best. For the

outer hull areas, I believe the family members of those who work there would be best. With family members of the workers, they will feel less like they are being watched and it can help unify the workers.”

“...Understood.”

He really is relatively normal. He never shows his face, he wears a ninja outfit on a daily basis, and his future wife is an English princess, but that's still relatively normal. I think.

The Vice President must have decided those two were done speaking because she raised a hand and spoke.

“With that settled, get that arranged as soon as possible. Make sure the Public Morals Committee and the other committees are prepared and make sure we can contact them at any time.”

“Judge. Also...”

“Oh, you know about the unofficial secret meeting we had up top earlier, right?”

“Judge. You decided to send ambassadors to Sviet Rus, Mogami, and Date.”

She had received a report on that, but there was one thing she wanted to know to help prepare.

“Who do you plan to send?”

“You’ve informed the three nations, right? Then they should give us their opinions before long. Probably tomorrow at the earliest. I’ll decide that once we have all their replies.”

“Judge. ...In other words, no need to hurry? Kanou-kun, take care of the preparations.”

“Judge.”

After seeing the automaton nod, Ookubo bowed to the others.

“Take care of the Secretary.”

Since her role was complete, she prepared to leave, but...

“Ookubo-sama, take this.”

Musashi's princess held out a paper box.

"This is a tart that Toori-sama made. It has no seaweed inside, so feel free to take it with you."

Mitotsudaira used her night vision to view Ookubo's expression.

Her eyebrows were raised in slight surprise.

She then looked Horizon in the eye, stepped back, and bowed.

"Thanks... Thank you."

Mitotsudaira smiled bitterly at the additional small bow when she took it.

...So this is the girl who has inherited the names of Ookubo Tadachika and Nagayasu.

Horizon had yet to inherit anyone's name, but she was the heir of Matsudaira Motonobu, previous representative of the Far East, and she possessed multiple Logismoi Óplo.

That double inherited name holder could seem overly formal, but she viewed Horizon on another level entirely.

She took the box, bowed again while seeming to shrink down a little, and finally left. Everyone nodded to each other as she did.

Gold Mar: "She still acts pretty distant, so no putting her in your doujinshi, Ga-chan."

Mal-Ga: "Judge. I have some flat glasses material to work on right now, so I want to get it done before we throw this guy in the water to soak. And I have Asama for summer, so she'll have to wait until after that."

Asama: "I-I don't like the sound of what I just heard! Not one bit!?"

Mitotsudaira told Asama to calm down and then approached Horizon.

"Horizon? Wasn't that tart for you? If you like, you can take mine instead."

"Eh!?" The nudist started shaking his head. "No, that won't work. I made yours into a pie with meat in it. It's only for you, Nate."

“Wh-what kind of bizarre thoughtfulness is that!?”

“Judge.” Horizon patted her on the shoulder. “Your daily work has paid off, Mitotsudaira-sama. He got the message that you want him to put meat in your pie. ...And based on that, Asama-sama’s will have alcohol inside.”

Asama opened her box and sniffed at it.

“Ah! It does! It really has alcohol in it! And it’s sake even!”

“Judge. Adele-sama’s will have a bodhisattva-in-the-box toy with it, the Tachibana Couple’s will be made of tortilla, and Tenzou-sama’s box will have a false bottom with a busty blondes porn game and manual hidden below.”

Each of them checked and either thanked Toori or quickly stuck the hidden item in their pocket.

As everyone gave Horizon looks of wonder, the nudist stared straight at her.

“That’s amazing, Horizon! It’s like you’re psychic!”

“For me, this was an easy task. ...I saw you making them.”

“Way to ruin it!!”

“U-um, but that aside, what do we do about Horizon’s tart?”

“Don’t be silly,” said a new voice.

It was Kimi. They turned around to find the Main Blue Thunder’s door open and Kimi stepping out with only sheets wrapped around her body.

“I had just gotten to sleep thinking about how much fun tomorrow would be, but this racket outside woke me up. ...Now, foolish brother, I turned the oven on, so go make another one if you’re going to. I’m sure none of you are planning to leave anytime soon.”

“You read us like a book. ...And we do need some time to discuss the ‘fun’ that will be beginning tomorrow.”

Ookubo and Kanou left because they were primarily in charge of making arrangements and making decisions on the scene. The diplomatic issues the rest of them were going to discuss had a different focus.

...Our future.

They all exchanged a glance and a nod. Seeing that, Kimi gave a somewhat sleepy smile.

“Foolish brother.”

She spoke to her younger brother while placing a hand on the open door for support.

“Why won’t you give Horizon the tart you left in the oven?”

“That one’s for you and me, sis. I was planning to make a new one for Horizon.

“Don’t be silly.” The corner of Kimi’s mouth rose in a smile. “Then give the one in the oven to Horizon. ...I’ll make one for the two of us. Go on.”

She pointed in through the door, but then she spotted Neshinbara.

“What a weird drawing.”

“Yeah...”

Mitotsudaira and the others could only nod in vague agreement.

Chapter 18: Young Girl in the Depths of a Dream

第十八章

『夢奥の小娘』

その人は
いつも何を見て
どうなっていくの
配点 (好奇心)



What is that person seeing

And what

Is happening to them?

Point Allocation (Curiosity)

A certain stone corridor was dim and unlit, but it was free of dust and covered in a red carpet.

Two people walked down that corridor, neither hurrying nor stopping. One was a slender man wearing a large M.H.R.R. uniform and the other wore the girl's version of that uniform with a monkey mask attached.

The man spoke to the monkey mask girl with a thin bitter smile below his somewhat curly hair.

"Hashiba, are you sure you should have left Edo? I am glad I can fully enjoy myself as a puppet with you here, but still."

"Testament. I, um, prefer the food here, so, well, I am glad to be here too, Matthias-sama."

"M.H.R.R. food is nothing but meat, it's really salty, and we finish everything off with beer. Are you sure you like that?"

"The salt can be removed by boiling it. And, um...I'm small."

Hashiba lowered her head and mask as she spoke. She placed her hands on her shoulders and lowered them to her stomach.

"Everyone says I should gain some weight. But with this body..."

"I shouldn't have said that. I apologize." Matthias's bitter smile grew. "You could probably get plenty of girly sweets when you were in P.A. Oda. Now, I've never been over there, but what was the food like there?"

"Over there?"

"I mean Edo, Hashiba."

"To follow the history recreation, the food is quite restrictive." She seemed to

realize something then. “Oh, but there’s plenty of seafood. And rice too. The Edo clan seems to have put a lot of work into their history recreation, so they did a good job of making adjustments when we had them go boom with a dragon line reactor the other day. Um...”

“The fish-focused Far Eastern diet is nice since you don’t gain weight.”

“T-Testament. It is nice, but, um, to choose my words carefully...I personally wish they had more of the basics.”

“You can eat three meals a day in A.H.R.S.’s cafeteria until you leave. They have mutton meals and the like, so go for it.”

“Thank you very much...”

Once she said that, a *lernen figur* appeared next to Hashiba. It contained text.

Nari Nari Nari: “Hashiba-sama, please eat, just as Matthias-sama suggests. You can find plenty of the ‘basics’ there. Even the lifelike models can preserve their various functions more efficiently by extracting nutrients from food.”

“...? Hashiba? Who is that?”

Nari Nari Nari: “Nice to meet you, Matthias-sama. I am Ishida Mitsunari, one of Hashiba-sama’s aides. I am currently a program, but I intend to further construct my personality to officially inherit my name.”

“Oh?” Matthias looked to Mitsunari inside the *lernen figur* and gave a light bow. “It sounds like I will be interacting with you a lot, so it is a pleasure meeting you. Please work to keep me in my position as puppet as long as possible. ...But does this mean Hashiba-kun is already thinking of Sekigahara?”

Nari Nari Nari: “I have determined it would be more accurate to say she is thinking about what comes after Honnouji.”

“Hey,” cut in Hashiba as she raised her shoulders. “You shouldn’t be talking too much about that, San-chan. You’re a smart girl, so you understand why, don’t you?”

Nari Nari Nari: “It would seem the development of my personality still needs to catch up.”

Matthias smiled as Mitsunari bowed inside her *lernen figur* and disappeared.

“Ha ha. What a lively exchange. I’m jealous, but I also have high hopes for you, Hashiba. ...After all, my position as puppet is being supported by such lively and amazing people.”

“Testament. There are a variety of other issues, but, um, please trust that we will support you.”

The corridor turned to the right. At the same time, the windows on either wall moved to a higher position. And these windows contained stained glass.

As the tall and short figures turned the corner, the tall one had a long, casual stride while the short one jogged a little, but...

“Matthias-sama, this leads to...”

“Testament. We have not been down here. But I trust that you will protect your puppet.”

“Testament. I will not do so myself, but, um, uh...”

As she walked and caught up with Matthias, Hashiba stretched her hands forward. “Is this how it works?” she muttered as she clapped her hands.

“———?”

Someone else appeared behind them.

The new appearance was a girl in an M.H.R.R. uniform without a coat.

The tall, black-haired girl with focused eyes kneeled behind Matthias and Hashiba. Her swaying ponytail was tied high on the back of her head with a hair clip resembling a horizontal silver plate.

“It is a pleasure to see thee this morning. I, Fukushima, have arrived in response to thy call. What is thy bidding?”

“Fukushima-san... You don’t have to force those archaic pronouns into your sentences.”

“I am not forcing anything, so thy concerns are unfounded.”

Fukushima’s comment was followed by an awkward silence. To fill the gap, Hashiba turned toward Matthias while seeming to knead the air in her hands.

“U-um, Matthias-sama? Uh, Fukushima-san, r-really is, um, a good and obedient girl. Please try not to let your first impression of her do too much damage.”

“To choose my words carefully, I can see P.A. Oda has a great variety of personnel. ...She is one of the Ten Spears under your command, isn’t she? She is the effective leader of the group, Fukushima Masanori, isn’t she?”

“Oh, you’re familiar with her, Matthias-sama? Um, well, that pretty much sums it up. But, uh, I bet you don’t know this: She loves it when you call her Nori-chan.”

“I-I do not.”

“Nori-chan.”

“D-don’t call me that...”

“S-see? Look how delighted she is!”

“Hashiba, that is a fascinating observation. ...But let’s get back on topic.”

“Testament.”

Hashiba nodded, stood in front of Fukushima, crouched down, and placed her hands on the girl’s shoulders. Then she patted those shoulders a few times.

“Okay, Nori-chan, can you take care of things up ahead here?”

“I came here in a hurry, but what do thou need me to do?”

“Well, it’s about this.”

Matthias opened a *lernen figur* as he smiled with the ends of his eyebrows lowered. He held the thin Catholic *lernen figur* in one hand and inserted it into the door ahead of them. Once he did, the door slowly began to open.

“This room belongs to Current K.P.A. Italia Chancellor Innocentius X. Although to be exact, it isn’t his. It belongs to his older and younger sister-in-law who has temporarily inherited his name.”

Fukushima frowned at Matthias’s words.

“Older and younger sister-in-law?”

“Testament. There are people like that too.”

“Why do ye need me to enter her room?”

“Well, the thing about her – oh, and her name is Olimpia – is that in exchange for protecting K.P.A Italia, she gave us the right to give her our opinions. However, she won’t let us meet with her. Why not, you ask? Apparently because she won’t leave her room.”

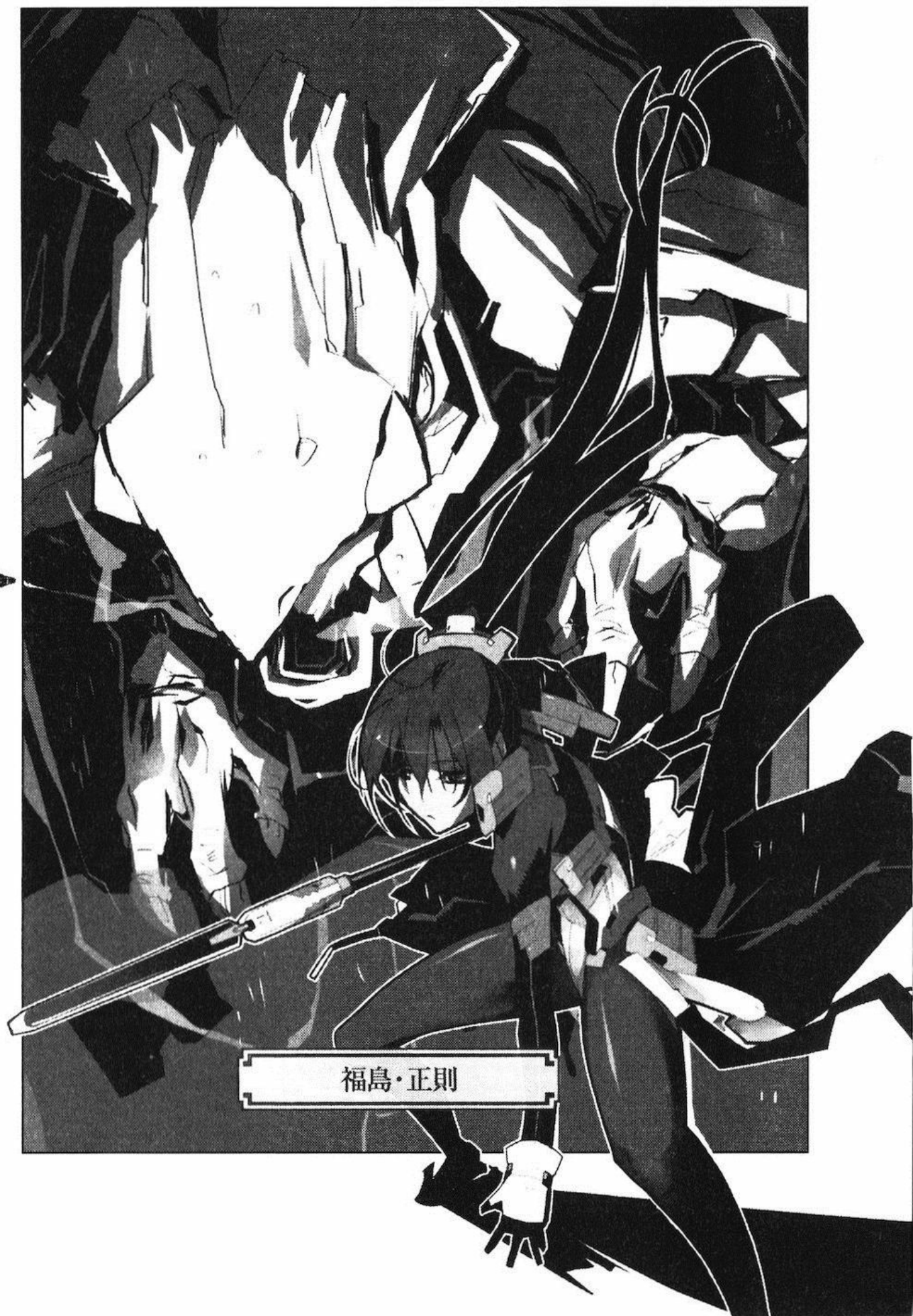
And...

“For some reason, she asked that we go meet her, but...”

A rumbling sound coincided with some footsteps. After two footsteps and the wind of something being pushed forward, something slammed into the wall on the other side of the large door.

A bipedal beast stood in the large stone hall beyond the partially opened door. It was at least seven meters tall, it had a horn, and it had a tail.

“...!!”



福島・正則

Its roar shook the stone walls and stained glass.

When Matthias saw it, he nodded toward Fukushima.

“That is not her, just to be clear.”

“I had guessed as much. But in that case, what is it?”

“It’s why we called you here. However...” Matthias smiled. “Keep in mind that you shouldn’t kill it. It’s apparently a part of her.”

Fukushima nodded, added a “testament”, and leaned her kneeling body forward.

A moment later, she split the wind in two and launched her body into the room containing the enemy.

She began the battle.

Fukushima found herself in a large open space.

It continued one hundred meters back and was fifty meters wide. The lines of pillars on either side formed arches to support the large space. A raised platform covered in red carpet was positioned at the back.

...Is this a cathedral?

As she commented in her heart, the enemy came from the right.

It was a dragon. That type of beast was common in the New World and Ezo which recreated it. This seemed to be a wingless terrestrial type. Its shell resembled armor, but Fukushima concluded it was a living dragon and not a mechanical beast.

She inhaled and spread her legs to the front and back in respect to her opponent.

“Testament. Here it comes.”

And come it did.

However, the approaching attack was not a physical strike.

The dragon leaned back from Fukushima who prepared herself to its right.

“———!”

It was too far away to reach, but the beast still thrust its face forward and low to the ground.

Its fangs did not reach, but something was fired from deep in the throat visible between its wide-opened maw.

...A dragon cannon!

White light burst through the cathedral.

This roar attack used the ether accumulated in an internal organ and it was a feature common to all types of dragon.

When fired, a ring of water vapor and a piercing blast of light burst from the dragon's mouth. The meter thick pillar of light swept a bit through the air before colliding with Fukushima.

The light exploded and filled the cathedral with the color white.

The sound roared and the walls and floor shook, but...

“———!!”

The dragon transformed. Even as it forced out the line of light, its extended neck shrank as if pulling back into its torso. And as its slender front legs extended forward, the area from its neck to its jaw expanded.

It had rearranged its skeleton.

To provide flexibility of movement and to allow forces to harmlessly escape their body, most dragon bones had a composite structure and the neck bones were no exception. Most dragons' neck joints were split between the front and back, and by releasing the connection between the front and back...

“...!”

They could expand the caliber of their cannon.

Using the previous attack as a guide and a means of adjusting the power, the full strength of the dragon's lungs was used to fire a giant ball of light.

The mass of light gathered ether around itself like an electrical discharge and instantly travelled down the previous light that was linked to its target like an umbilical cord.

The five meter bullet of light shot down the path of the previous explosion of light and thus straight toward Fukushima's previous location and beyond.

The power rushed toward its destination with the sound of scorching heat.

The light erased even the shaded images of the cathedral's interior.

A heated wind whipped up and the light scattered, but...

“———”

A small sound came from the destination of all that power.

It was a voice. It was drowned out by the volume of the explosion and wind, but Fukushima still spoke.

“———!”

Her dignified voice was immediately followed by a certain movement.

It came from the dragon.

Once it had finished firing its cannon, it leaned its head even further down and raced toward the vortex of glowing destruction that had yet to settle down.

The cathedral was large to a human, but it only took a few steps for the great beast.

As it closed its mouth and pointed its forehead toward its prey, the next transformation began.

The armor on its back and waist opened backwards and the heat exhaust ports below the armor were exposed to the air behind it. And...

“...!”

The heat built up from the dragon cannon blasts exploded backwards from those heat exhaust ports on its back. This secondary roar accelerated its charge.

Shimmering heat filled with some ether fragments transformed the dragon's charge into a high-speed glide. It almost seemed to have been kicked forward as

it aimed for its prey with the horn on its forehead.

They were going to clash.

A great tremor arrived through the closed door as a sound.

As the door rattled in its frame and produced sounds of creaking and collisions, Matthias asked Hashiba a question.

“Hashiba, Fukushima made this sound easy, but she didn’t just immediately get herself killed, did she?”

“...Oh, dear.”

Matthias froze in place at the monkey mask girl’s quiet response.

After a while, he cleared his throat.

“You didn’t expect this to happen?”

“Um, well, uh, I don’t really have that much self-confidence, but, um, uh...”

She intertwined her fingers in front of her chest and continued quietly.

“I doubt Nori-chan would lose...”

“Then,” said Matthias as he placed a hand on the door. “In the worst case... can you call three of your Spears this time?”

He threw open the door and revealed what was on the other side.

The dragon’s giant body was lying unmoving against the wall, and... “Thou are being too hasty.”

Fukushima turned around when she noticed them.

She was unharmed.

Matthias’s eyebrows rose a little.

...Oh?

He was astonished.

He did not know what had occurred inside the cathedral, but the dragon had

definitely gone on a rampage and it had definitely made a finishing blow. And yet...

“I suppose this means you won.”

“No, my victory is Hashiba-sama’s victory.”

Fukushima bowed.

“That is the true desire of the Ten Spears.”

She was holding a certain weapon.

Matthias’s eyebrows rose when he saw the long-handled, silver-adorned, spear-like weapon.

“That is-...”

“Y-you know what it is, Matthias-sama!? You are, um, very knowledgeable!”

“No, I was just going to say it’s beautiful.”

Hashiba slowly looked the other way.

However, a quiet laugh was heard. It was a bitter one and it came from Fukushima.

“Hashiba-sama. Why not just accept this as an excellent opportunity to test Ichinotani?”

At first glance, the Ichinotani weapon she spun in the fingers of one hand resembled a spear, but one spot in particular was clearly different.

“...Does it have no tip?”

“It actually does, but...”

Fukushima pointed Ichinotani toward Matthias. A fifteen centimeter wide and sixty centimeter long silver plate was attached to the front end of the long shaft.

However, its end was not pointed. It was narrow like a blade, but it was squared off.

It almost looks like a chisel, noted Matthias as Fukushima swung it.

“———”

It quickly shortened. Once the two and a half meter shaft shrank to only about sixty centimeters, she adjusted her grip on it.

“Like this, it looks more like an iron plate striking weapon.”

“Testament. But what exactly does-...”

Matthias looked over at the collapsed dragon.

“As a puppet, maybe it would be best if I didn’t know.”

“I will leave that up to Hashiba-sama.”

She looked to Hashiba who frantically waved her hands back and forth.

“Th-that is, um, your weapon, N-Nori-chan, so it, well, isn’t my decision.”

“Then let’s just call it a secret weapon. ...Got that, Fukushima?”

“Testament. ...Understood. But...”

Matthias followed Fukushima’s gaze back to the collapsed dragon by the wall.

However, the dragon was vanishing.

“What...”

She asked a question concerning the wall that now had nothing in front of it.

“What just happened?”

Fukushima recalled the tactile feedback felt through Ichinotani, the shaking of the ground, the sound of the wind and the roars, as well as the heat and presence of the dragon.

“That was clearly a real dragon.”

“Her race possesses that power.”

Matthias started forward as he spoke. He chose to walk down the center of the cathedral. Fukushima followed after bowing, but she made sure to protect Hashiba from the front and the left as she did so.

He carries his body in a very regulated way, she judged from the movements of his shoulders. But as the Holy Roman Emperor, perhaps that should not be

surprising.

However...

“Matthias-sama, when thou said ‘her’ just now, did thou mean Olimpia-sama?”

“Yes. You can probably make a decent guess about most of it, but she belongs to a spirit race.”

What power of hers had created and erased that dragon?

“She desires sleep and grows by consuming the dreams she sees there.”

“...Grows?”

“Yes. Her growth requires an incredible amount of dreams, so while awake, she has to buy up everything she needs to maintain her happiness. Of course, that happiness does not remain in her dreams... And it goes beyond a mere feeling. It includes nearly everything: scenery, food, and even her own power. ...Look.”

The cathedral disappeared.

...What?

Fukushima and Matthias had been walking to the back of the cathedral, but now something else appeared before their eyes.

“A bedroom?”

Fukushima looked around.

She stood inside a dimly-lit circular bedroom with wooden walls.

It was large, but not as much as the previous cathedral. It was carpeted, bookshelves covered the walls, dolls and contraptions were placed here and there, and clothes were scattered about. And at the center of them all was a bed with a red canopy. And...

“Oh, my. All that noise woke me up. Who are you?”

An old woman sat inside it.

She wore a red stole over plain, red pajamas and she had a bent waist and

back. Her wrinkled face bent into a smile when she noticed the visitors.

“Oh, you were very cool in my dream.”

The old woman pulled off the blanket and started to get down onto the floor, but...

“Ah.”

Her foot caught on a pile of clothing and she started to trip.

...*Oh.*

Helping her would have been a trivial task for Fukushima, but...

“Watch out.”

Matthias took a step forward and supported her shoulder with a bitter smile on his face.

Fukushima agreed with the impressed gasp from Hashiba behind her and she slowly got down on one knee. She knew this would be a discussion between individuals more important than her.

But there was something she wanted to ask while the situation was still unclear.

“About that dragon...”

“Oh, that. That was a dream I was having. I was reading a book about dragon slaying before I went to sleep, you see. I thought the dragon seemed so strong, but it seems there are even stronger people out there.”

She gave a trouble smiled, but bent her eyes as she looked to Fukushima.

“I’m not entirely sure what you did, but thank you for not slicing through it and killing it. Simply knocking it down like that didn’t do any damage to me.”

“I am honored to receive thy praise.”

“What a formal girl.” The old woman’s bitter smile deepened and she looked to the man supporting her. “The new Holy Roman Emperor certainly looks unhealthy. You need to follow my example if you want to stay healthy. I look at and experience so many different things, go to sleep each night looking forward to tomorrow, and grow younger.”

“Grow...younger?”

Fukushima spoke aloud without thinking and the old woman turned toward her.

“Testament. That’s right. I grow younger. I was even more of a wrinkled old lady when I was born. As I consume more and more dreams, I grow younger. After all, a girl grows younger with her dreams. ...I was born aged and, as I have young dreams and consume my years, I will become a baby and ultimately disappear. That is my fate as Olimpia of the Reverse-Agers.”

She smiled and moved away from Matthias’s shoulder.

“Now that you have finally parted my dream and arrived here, I can speak with you outside of my dreams. It’s time to have a proper talk as the new Innocentius X like my big brother would do. ...So what do you wish to ask of me, who could easily grow so young I forget all about it?”

Chapter 19: Girl Seated in the Morning Sun

第十九章

『朝日落ち場の正座娘』



落日とは違い
陽光の差す場所
心の定まる時間、
配点（自問）

Sunlight different from the setting sun

Shines on this place

In this time for making up your mind

Point Allocation (Self-Questioning)

The Musashi seemed to have sunk inside the Ariake's giant dock and it was illuminated by the morning sunlight recreated by sign frames.

The Ariake's bow faced south, so the reproduced sunlight from the east shined on the port side.

To the west of Musashi Ariadust Academy on the rear central ship of Okutama, the morning sun and the school building's shadow reached a certain house at the same time.

The small, single-story house was surrounded by a yard on all sides. The bow end of the house had the sliding door removed and three walls left open. Currently, a casually-dressed middle aged man sat on the veranda.

He glanced behind him into the opened-up room where two automatons sat in front of a divine monitor producing a large widescreen sign frame.

Black disks were piled up next to them as they viewed the footage playing on the sign frame.

“ ‘Okutama’, I have a question about this Peace Sentai Augustus you have been showing me. What is the meaning of the main character Octavianus's catch phrase ‘I am Octavianus, the Father of the Country! Now, stick out your ass for a dreadful eight!’? Over.”

“ ‘Musashi’-sama, this is the series that came before Saint of Docking: Valentine, so...oh, but you did not see that one, did you? In either case, it is set on the Mediterranean, so it is quite passionate without crossing the gender line. Also, it is a three-member party now, but in another two episodes, Octavianus is unable to restrain his passion for his teammates and the party falls apart. Over.”

“Judge.” “Musashi” nodded and turned back toward the gaze watching them from the veranda. “Why are you wasting your money on this, Sakai-sama?”

“Well, you know. I wanted to see this when I was a kid, but I had too many lessons to take for inheriting my name. Now that they have a box set out, of course I’m going to buy it. Don’t you have things like that, ‘Musashi’-san? How old are you anyway? Before the great remodeling, wasn’t the Musashi built thirty years ago? Or should I go back 160 years to the construction of the large aerial ship it was based on?”

“Do you wish to be younger than your aide, Sakai-sama? Over. Oh, and a correction. I officially claim to be ten years old. That is when I went through my renewal. Over.”

“ ‘Musashi’-sama...that makes you the same age as us. Over.”

“Okutama” looked away from the screen, but “Musashi” expressionlessly placed a hand on her shoulder.

“Is that a problem? Over.”

“No, not really... But what were you like back then? Over.”

“Okutama” removed her data examination glasses as she asked and Sakai nodded.

“I hitched a ride a few times, like when I went to investigate the Chichibu Mountains, but at the time, she was an OS girl inside a sign frame. I think she occasionally entered a prototype body.”

“I am still a girl. I do not age. Over.”

“I even brought her some additional data from Tono-sensei for her to install.”

“I have heard from the engineers that my ability to develop myself was a primary focus during my OS days. In other words, the decision-making subroutines I built up back then are still being used today. Over.”

“Musashi” was not done speaking.

“And during the great remodeling, I gained this body, but as Sakai-sama said, I had a base body before that and I would install myself into it when needed. Although during my renewal, memories of the old ship could have caused a more awkward transition, so my memories up until then were erased. ...The same goes for ‘Musashino’, ‘Takao’, and ‘Oume’. Over.”

“Originally, ‘Musashi’-san commanded from Okutama in a four-ship setup along with Musashino, Takao, and Oume. Later, ships for diplomacy and transportation were added. Thirty years ago, they were made into the first and second port and starboard ships. And during the great remodeling ten years ago, they were made official ships.”

“Judge. That is when I was made the captain of all ships and ‘Okutama’, ‘Tama’, ‘Murayama’, ‘Shinagawa’, and ‘Asakusa’ were added as captain automatons for the individual ships. In that way, it was not so much a remodeling as it was a renewal to officially add on the ships we already had. Over.”

“Musashi” looked to Sakai again.

“But, Sakai-sama, why are you bringing up this nostalgic information that almost feels unknown even though I remember it? And why did you call me here during such a busy morning? Over.”

“Oh, yeah. I have some business that requires your detailed knowledge of the Musashi. There’s a lot I don’t know, so I’d like your help.”

“What would-...?”

Before “Musashi” could finish her question, she looked up because someone had bowed and entered the house.

“Futayo-sama? Over.”

“Musashi” looked to exactly the person mentioned in her question.

...What is this about?

As “Musashi” wondered that, Futayo noticed her. The girl looked to Sakai but raised her head a little when she saw “Musashi”. “Musashi” concluded it was an expression of “surprise”.

But Futayo quickly corrected the position of her eyebrows, closed her eyes, and bowed toward the automaton.

She circled to the front of the veranda with a calm, undisturbed pace. Noticing how the girl moved not too much and not too little, “Musashi” was reminded of

Kazuno, the automaton who had supposedly helped raise the girl.

There were likely many differences between a captain automaton and one that lived in a city. Especially in relation to knowledge and the mutual divine transmissions of shared memories, their databanks and functionality would be quite different.

But when it came to something as uncertain as a human being...

...It is hard to believe an automaton could give them such perfect movements through the process known as training.

What knowledge and skills had the automaton named Kazuno had? And what kind of modifications had she undergone to teach them?

Indirectly sensing someone who had to be one of the world's greatest, "Musashi" belatedly carved her own deficiencies into her memory. And into her shared memory.

<Listen, everyone. The Ariake's automatons have been helping us a lot lately, but nothing good will come of getting lazy. Complete two hundred sets of thirty items of laundry during your work today. Over.> The others sent back complaints over the shared memory. Behind her, "Okutama" set the sign frame to play at three-times speed, presumably to work through the black disks faster. The sound sped up.

"I-am-Octavianus-the-Father-of-the-Country! Now-stick-out-your-ass-for-a-dreadful-eight! Fwohhhh!"

...Is 'a dreadful eight' meant to sound like 'a dreadful fate'?

Back when it was airing, she might have been able to solve that mystery by sending in a question, but hoping for an answer now was meaningless. She placed the question on hold and looked to Sakai.

He already had his back to her.

Futayo slowly got down on one knee and "Musashi" asked Sakai a question as he faced the girl.

"Sakai-sama, should I prepare some tea? Over."

"No, I'd prefer you were here, 'Musashi'-san. Tamako, you get the tea."

“Eh? But the main character is in the middle of his seventh time. ...‘Musashi’-sama, you’ve learned that look gets results, haven’t you? Judge. I’ll take care of that. Over.”

Futayo watched “Okutama” with an unconcerned and expressionless look. Based on the girl’s gaze, she may have had a habit of observing how people walked. Based on the level of the automaton who had taught her, “Musashi” could guess that their movements contained a lot of waste.

...But why would he want me to be here for this?

“Anyway.” Sakai spoke to Futayo without turning back toward “Musashi”. “Da’s Daughter-kun, I’m not really sure how much help I can be for what you’re asking. But I do have someone here who knows more about the Musashi than anyone else, so try asking her.”

“You can’t do it yourself, Principal Sakai?”

“I’m already relying on my age, you see.”

He laughed bitterly before continuing.

“Da’s Daughter-kun, you would be better off with something more straightforward, not my kind of cheap tricks. ...Oh, but I’m not forcing you or anything. That way just seems, well, like more fun.”

“Sakai-sama. May I ask something? Over.”

“Hm?”

He still did not turn around, so “Musashi” asked her question while aware she was glaring at him.

“What exactly is Futayo-sama asking for? Over.”

“Tell her, Da’s Daughter-kun.”

“Judge.” Futayo sat the rest of the way down and placed Tonbokiri’s spare next to her. “I am searching for someone who will act as my teacher, or for a dojo or similar organization to join.”

“Musashi” concluded that was an impossible request.

She instantly searched for every type of dojo on the Musashi and checked the footage from their demonstrations and competitions stored in the Musashi's databanks, but...

"I doubt anywhere on the Musashi would be able to satisfy someone as skilled as you, Futayo-sama. Over."

"No, I am not trying to challenge the dojo and I am not simply looking for a place to train."

Futayo met "Musashi's" gaze with a powerful one of her own and spoke.

"I am still continuing my training from my time in Mikawa. I have also included the basic training from Oriotorai-dono's lessons to create my own personal style."

"Judge. I have determined Oriotorai-sama's lessons are quite unfair and aggressive for a member of mankind, but is that still not enough? Why not ask her to be your training teacher as well as your schoolteacher? Over."

"Musashi" had searched through all the active fighters and Oriotorai best fit the requirements, but Futayo shook her head.

"Oriotorai-dono's sword is..."

She thought for a moment before continuing.

"It is meant to be our enemy and it must stay that way."

"You've been paying attention."

Futayo's expression relaxed when she heard Sakai's comment. She may have felt he had supported her conclusion. The man then placed a hand on his chin.

"I see. It's true Makiko-kun might be able to teach you, but that would of course mean taking up a lot of her time. And as your schoolteacher, she has to deal with the others as well. And most importantly, she has to act as your 'enemy', so if you asked her to start acting as your 'ally'..."

"If we look at her 'enemy' role as a school of martial arts, it would be the same as having her shift to a different school. While it would help me, it would lead to errors by the 'enemy' for my classmates," said Futayo. "Also, I am honestly not sure what it is I want."

The girl tensed her shoulders and “Musashi” asked a question.

“In other words...you have not decided whether you want to continuing growing as you are or if you want to introduce something new? Over.”

“Judge. Not even I know that, so I was thinking of leaving that up in the air for now.”

I see, thought “Musashi”. If her request is about “type” and not “level”, then I can relax the search criteria.

“Judge. Understood. I will create a list of places that may be able to fulfill that role and send it to you. Please wait until about eight o’clock. Will that be sufficient? Over.”

“Oh, yes... Thank you very much!”

She bowed with enough force to shake her ponytail, so she had apparently wanted this quite badly.

I need to live up to her expectations, decided “Musashi” as she saw Sakai’s shoulders relax.

He turned toward her with the corners of his mouth raised.

“What do you think, ‘Musashi’-san? Should we bring out that old thing? ...Are you interested, Da’s Daughter-kun?”

“What is ‘that old thing’?”

“Judge,” said “Musashi” while thinking that there was only one thing here that she knew about and that Futayo would be interested in. “Sakai-sama showed it to me while telling me some old stories before. And I put it away because it is not something to be showing off like that. Over.”

Namely...

“It is the divine weapon that Sakai-sama used in his student days. If Tonbokiri’s spare seems insufficient, why not take it? Over.”

The sun was slowly beginning to rise.

The height of the sunlight was shifting from early morning to morning as a

single shadow flew diagonally down from the sky.

It was Unturning Centipede, the mobile shell of Date Vice Chancellor Date Narumi.

The wings of light on the centipede's back faded and seemed to vanish into the sunlight.

"Vice President Date Narumi has returned. Guide me in."

After the conversation that led to, several sign frames appeared along her path down. The guided purification corridor disinfected her and removed any spells that may have been cast on her without her knowledge.

Unturning Centipede slowed as it passed through those torii-style sign frames.

Soon, something came into view up ahead.

"Sendai Castle, this is Unturning Centipede. I am entering Main Runway 2 as guided."

It was a carved mountain.

A mountain seemed to face the city below her and that mainly stone mountain was split open about a third of the way in from the east side.

Unturning Centipede was heading for a D-shaped cliff seven hundred meters tall. Its surface was tilted slightly as if to form an umbrella and it contained the sunlit national emblem of Sendai Date as well as...

"I have returned."

Unturning Centipede flew toward the thirty meter wide and fifteen meter tall entrance to a runway.

Unturning Centipede rolled forward in midair to travel feet-first.

In case something went wrong inside, flying in head-first was not the best plan. Unlike an open takeoff and landing zone...

...Sendai Castle is a closed fortress.

She flew inside. The bright sky in her vision grew dark and both the sounds and

wind changed. Unturning Centipede's sight devices began amplifying the light. The management mode of the auditory devices, joints, and artificial muscles shifted from flight mobility mode to ground cruising mode.

The restraints protecting her bodies against the Gs were removed.

"Nn."

Her inner suit loosened a little and she started to feel the warmth and her sweaty skin.

I'm home, she thought, so...

"Prepare for capture."

A catapult lane curved along the floor toward the runway entrance and Unturning Centipede reached its right arm toward the arresting rope hung high above the lane.

The catapult lane was a floor panel that raced along rails installed in the runway.

When leaving, the object on it would be accelerated from the back of the runway to the exit to launch them out. When returning, its accelerators were switched off as it waited at the entrance of the runway and it would carry whatever the arresting rope captured to the back of the runway.

The panel was thirty meters long and five meters wide, but when flying in using flight mobility mode, one would overshoot it in an instant.

However, Unturning Centipede managed to grab the shimenawa hanging from a metal pole supported on either side.

A divine transmission commented on the fact that it grabbed the first of the several ropes prepared.

"Vice Chancellor, we have a second and third one prepared, so try to use them sometimes."

"Sorry, Rusu-san, but I quite like going for #1."

After grabbing the shimenawa hanging from a metal pole, Unturning Centipede pulled the catapult lane forward with its inertia.

Its wings kept it floating, but it had a lot of inertial weight. The wind rumbled as the catapult lane moved along the rails.

As if in response, something moved in the opposite direction on the right.

Beyond the atmosphere buffering spell sign frame, someone was being pulled out by a catapult lane with three other gods of war.

“Oniniwa-san? Are you taking over for me?”

“You just happened to arrive when we were leaving. A girl shouldn’t be getting home in the morning. It’s indecent. Even if it’s your duty, it isn’t setting a good example for the underclassmen.”

“Sorry about that. Then did the mid-level ones come back from below because of me? I need to thank them later.”

“Testament. Also, Kagetsuna seems to want to speak with you. Meet with him if you have a chance.”

By the time she replied with “testament”, Unturning Centipede had slowed and could place its feet on the ground.

It stood on top of the moving catapult lane.

<Release: Confirmed>

The limbs and torso made of large armor split apart and Narumi stepped out.

Her long hair blew in the wind and Unturning Centipede closed itself inside its dual pitch space behind her.

As soon as her feet touched the catapult lane, Unturning Centipede vanished into a spray of ether light. Then she took another step forward.

“Vice President Date Narumi has returned.”

The catapult lane reached the end and she stepped off the lane and onto the standby zone.

After signing the return confirmation a female student handed her from the left, she looked around and noticed something about the people’s movements, rows of gods of war, and equipment being brought in.

“We’re on alert. ...Well done.”

Her smiling comment elicited a cheer from everyone in the large standby zone. She nodded back toward them and turned toward the runway behind her.

She heard a great noise and saw Oniniwa and the others heading out for their patrol.

Finally, the runway's defensive doors closed. Instead of just one, a total of twelve doors closed with reinforcing spell emblems added in.

"We may have put this together in a hurry, but when fully deployed, it should be able to withstand a dragon line reactor, Aki, or the unknown attack that destroyed Benkei."

They could fight at any time.

In that way, they were not just on alert and not just doing nothing.

...We're preparing for war.

Narumi felt satisfaction at that term as she continued walking.

"Where is Katakura?"

"The Vice President is in the main garden."

"...Is he with Masamune?"

"Testament."

Her shoulders drooped at the students' answer.

"Honestly, this is so much trouble. Or..."

The heels of her false legs rang out as she muttered to herself.

"Maybe I'm spoiled to have so many things I need to protect."

Chapter 20: Dwellers of a Rocky Place

第二十章

『岩場の宿り人達』



秘めたる奥に
本心はあるのか
配点（隠し事）

Are there true feelings

Behind the hidden depths?

Point Allocation (Secrets)

Narumi stepped out into the light.

Sendai Castle was a fortress carved out of a mountain and even the interior of the sealed space was reinforced. Only one place was filled with light like this.

...Even if it is an artificial garden.

The garden contained flower beds, a small stream, and a pond.

The sky was replaced by a divine monitor that recreated the actual sky outside. The monitor was made from several thin panels and it currently displayed the morning sky.

Wind could only enter or exit through the passageway, so the sweet smell of flowers and the clear smell of flowing water both tickled at her nose. She also felt a slight stuffiness, perhaps due to the recreated warmth of the sunlight.

Narumi walked down a gravel path cutting through the flower beds. She walked on her toes so that her heels did not make holes in the path.

“—————”

The gravel did not even stir below her feet. She only heard the occasional quiet sound of her feet hitting the ground, but she produced no sound or motion from the gravel, as if walking on a solid board.

She reached a bridge crossing the meandering stream.

“Katakura.”

“Eh? Oh, right, right, right. Narumi-kun, wait just a second. Just a second, okay? I need to prepare the energy I need for this conversation.”

A boy wearing glasses and a straw hat stood up from the flower bed on Narumi’s right. He had removed the shirt sleeves of his inner suit which was printed with the name Katakura Kagetsuna. He was also holding something.

“Katakura. ...The main garden is a public space, so I’m not sure you should be planting potatoes in the flower beds.”

“What? Narumi-kun, you mustn’t let common sense hold you back. Oh, I’m ready now, so can I release my energy?”

“If you want.”

“Then here I go. ...Hey, Narumi-kun! I went to all the trouble of making this shut-in’s fortress! We’re an evil organization now, so what’s wrong with ignoring the history recreation and growing some potatoes!? You got a problem with it!? Do you!? I even bred my own cultivar named after its golden color and an Incan king from its native South America! I went all Cusco on this Cápac Gold!”

“You didn’t need to add the Gold to the name.”

“D-dammit. What’s that ‘you have no guts’ look for!? You’re going to give a boost to my masochistic heart! But as one of the evil organization’s generals, I want to sell potatoes until I have enough money for a god of war or two! Let’s make even more potato fields and hide them from the Testament Union! That sounds great!”

“The evil general is gardening in a straw hat?”

“Well, the other generals were single-handedly threatening the heroes or fighting a mysterious being.”

Katakura shrugged and Narumi frowned.

“Mysterious? But wasn’t the thing Oniniwa-san pursued last night after we closed it in here-...”

“Oh, that was just a figure of speech. It would be too much trouble if I didn’t call it that. You need to get used to how I talk, Narumi-kun. You may be an expert at deflecting things, but you let words get to you too easily.”

“Do I?”

“You aren’t an elder sister, right?”

Narumi recalled the night before, and...

“That was-...!”

“I never expected the evil general to get so confused and let herself be forced into negotiating with the heroes. We should celebrate that you still have a human side left. ...Right!?”

Katakura coquettishly pointed at her, so she stomped diagonally on the blade of a hoe sitting on the ground. The handle shot up and struck his crotch from below.

“...Hh.”

He sank into the flower bed while staring up into the sky and Narumi sighed.

“Why not train some? The Testament descriptions have you fighting a fair bit, don’t they?”

A trembling hand rose from the flower bed, telling her to wait. After a while, she heard him slapping his lower belly and then speaking.

“Hn... Yes. I-I’m fine. I’m fine! It still works! It still works!?”

“Why was that a question and why do you sound so effeminate?”

“A-a girl would never understand! Heh heh. Jealous!? That’s what you get!”

Narumi opened a sign frame.

“Rusu-san, Katakura has gone crazy again, so could you do something about it?”

“Vice Chancellor, I will have difficulty dealing with the problem unless you are more specific.”

“Hmm. I guess it’s a problem with his brain.”

“Ah! Wh-why are you calling someone else to judge me!? This has to do with our crotches!”

“Then how about I chop yours in two so we can share the problem? I’ll throw my half away, though.”

“J-just because you don’t have one is no reason to suggest anything so frightening! Just so you know, mine just froze over!”

Katakura opened a sign frame labeled “I’ll Never Forget This Notebook” and typed at it as he stood up.

What is with this guy? wondered Narumi before asking him a question.

“Where is Masamune?”

“Eh? Oh, she’s training over there. Eh? What’s this!? You’re interested in our Masamune!? Who gave you permission!? Ow! What kind of girl throws seed potatoes at people at Mach speeds! You want to fight!? ...I’m sorry, so don’t glare at me like that. But those seed potatoes are important. You’re not supposed to waste food, you see. You eat them like this... Oh, no! I really did just eat one with eyes! Eh? Masamune? You can go see her! You have my permission! You got that!? My permission!”

“I know I told you that you could release your energy, but how about you calm down a little?”

“Now, now. This is a liberal arts sort of energy. Oh, and Masamune-kun is over there.”

Katakura grabbed a sign frame and used it like a fan to point toward a cherry tree with green leaves.

A girl was swinging a wooden sword below it. She was somewhat tall and slender.

“Masamune.”

Narumi’s shoulders relaxed as she walked over and spoke to the girl with the wooden sword.

“You were all right?”



伊達・政宗

Narumi saw the girl turn toward her.

Her sweaty face looked her way.

“Narumi.”

Masamune’s hair was plastered to her sweaty forehead, so she brushed it up and smiled.

“Of course I’m all right. I’m always safe as long as I’m here, aren’t I? Just like Kojirou.”

“W-well, that is true.”

“Sorry.”

Narumi tilted her head as Masamune tied her hair back.

“Why would you need to apologize?”

“Because I’ve been causing you a lot of trouble by being so worthless.”

“It’s thanks to you that we can even exist, so we will do anything for you. It’s the same as doing it for our own existence, after all.”

“...Sorry.”

Narumi could say nothing more when the other girl repeated herself with a bitter smile. Masamune resumed swinging her wooden sword.

“Have you seen, Kojirou? I haven’t seen him all morning. Not even at breakfast.”

“Eh? No, Kojirou-sama is-...”

“Narumi-kun!”

Katakura’s voice interrupted them.

“Could you help harvest my Cápac Gold!?”

“What? Well, I don’t mind helping out a little...”

She saw Kagetsuna crawling through the flower bed with his butt sticking out.

“Now! Come harvest my Cápac Gold! Ahhn, hurry up! I’m spreading it wide!! Wait, where did you get that sickle from!? And who would throw it!? Normal

people would throw a seed potato! What is wrong with you!? Hmm!?”

“I’ve been thinking. Maybe I should start telling Katakura what I actually think.”

“You shouldn’t do that, Narumi. Katakura is sensitive, so it would make him even crazier.”

“Heh heh heh! See!? See!? Uhohoi! Uhohoi!”

Narumi ignored Katakura as he began a step dance with his hands on his hips. As if to take her place, Masamune smiled toward him and opened her mouth.

“You’re always such an idiot, Katakura.”

“D-don’t make it sound like that’s a foregone conclusion, you second year Chancellor! M-Masamune-kun! Who do you think you’re talking to!? I am your upperclassman, you know!?”

“Masamune is the Chancellor and President, so you lose quite spectacularly in rank.”

“S-so do you! So do you! Ah, what are you whispering in Masamune-kun’s ear!? Masamune-kun, don’t smile and nod! Let me in! Pass that comment onto me! And Masamune-kun! Doesn’t an unnecessary side note in the Testament descriptions tell us that you and I gain a lot of fans in the future for our homosexual relationship!?”

“Yes, but I’m a girl, so that rules that out. As a boy, you’ll have to work extra hard all on your own.”

“What’s that tone of voice and smile for!? You don’t think I can do it, do you!?”

“Well, no. To be clear, it’s biologically impossible. Are you saying you can do it?”

“What!? Of course I can! I’ll totally do it! Don’t underestimate your upperclassman! Y-you won’t like me when I’m angry! My favorite spells in RPGs are the instant death ones! I’ll play both sides of the Cápac Gold myself! ...Whoa, that was close! What kind of girl throws hoes at people, Narumi-kun!?”

“Ha ha. You’re really strong, Narumi.”

“Umm.” Narumi faced Masamune’s slight smile but was unsure what to say.
“You shouldn’t pay much attention to him.”

“You just told her to ignore me, didn’t you!? Didn’t you!? I’m the Vice President, you know!? ...Okay, she can ignore me, so can you stop glaring at me... please?”

Narumi had to start from the beginning due to that interruption, so she placed a hand on Masamune’s shoulder.

“Listen, Masamune. You are plenty strong already, so don’t look at everything so negatively.”

“But... Then why am I getting skinnier and weaker every day?”

Masamune wrinkled her brow.

“Even the head of the Health Committee won’t tell me why. Only that the cause is unknown. ...I supposedly inherited the dragon’s power just like Kojirou, but my body has been so unsteady and I keep getting skinnier.”

“Well...”

“What’s wrong with me?”

And...

“And if no one knows why, am I just going to keep getting weaker?”

Narumi was speechless.

...It’s just like Katakura said

This was what it meant to let words get to her. In battle, she could immediately find the optimal response, but she was at a loss when it came at her in the form of words.

However, there was one thing she could say.

The Testament descriptions were the rules of this world.

They were how things should be and how things should happen. Everything in the world was to remain in compliance with the Testament’s instructions, so...

“There is nothing wrong with you. After all, you have officially inherited the name of Date Masamune, ruler of Oushuu. If there was something wrong with you, you wouldn’t have inherited that.”

“But...what about Katakura?”

“Well... There is something wrong with him, but that’s different.”

“Whaaaat!? What did you just sayyyyy!?”

She decided to ignore him and continue the conversation.

The ends of Masamune’s eyebrows lowered and she looked up at Narumi.

“But I...”

“It is true you’re losing weight every day.” Narumi narrowed her eyes. “But that should settle down before long. Make sure you eat. And...we are here to support you, Masamune. You only have to make your decisions. We will run down that path ahead of you and protect you.”

After Narumi said that, she heard a sudden voice from beyond Masamune.

“Well said, Narumi.”

It was a woman’s voice and she knew whose it was.

“Principal Yoshihime.”

A woman walked in from the garden’s opposite entrance beyond Masamune.

She was a demonic woman, as well as...

...Masamune’s mother.

A single horn grew from the right side of Yoshihime’s forehead and she wore a red-dyed Sviet Rus uniform modified in the Far Eastern style. That uniform swayed as she came to a stop seven meters away.

With Masamune between them, Narumi could not do anything from this distance. Of course, she had no intention of anything like that since they were on the same side, but...

...She never lets her guard down in that regard. It makes her difficult to deal with.

Yoshihime smiled toward Narumi, which made Narumi cautious. When that woman smiled, she was usually plotting something unpleasant.

That was why Narumi made a smile of her own and spoke.

“Principal Yoshihime? I just finished informing Masamune of my return, so I would like to return to my room.”

“Before you do that, come with me.”

It was forceful, but Principal’s orders were absolute for the Vice Chancellor.

I can’t believe this, she thought as Yoshihime placed a hand on her mouth.

“I would like to speak with you about what is to come.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Testament.” The woman nodded. “We can make a suggestion of our own concerning Musashi’s ambassador, so I would like your opinion now that you have visited them.”

Namely...

“Who could we ask for to ensure everything goes smoothly? The elder sister lover?”

Isa had thought for a while that mornings started early on the Musashi.

She had boarded at IZUMO and lived as a guest more than as one of the Ten Braves until leaving during the Battle of Mikatagahara, but...

...The activity in Musashi’s cities is synchronized with the engine division.

To Isa, it felt more like a city than an aerial ship. It also felt like an industrial complex that linked the accumulation and sharing of the ether tank with the facilities that used the ether.

...We call that a kombinat in Far Eastern, but I think that comes from Sviet Rus’s Russian.

According to Anayama, Musashi was sending ambassadors to Sviet Rus, Mogami, and Date. They were apparently taking those three nations’

suggestions into consideration when it came to who they chose, but...

“The city continues on like normal.”

Isa was on her way to the underground portion of Musashino, the Musashi’s first central ship.

She would take the long block lift down from the rear surface to reach the engine division along with the other workers.

She had disguised herself as a Musashi resident. Nezu and Yuri had claimed they wanted to see their families and had convinced some of those leaving the Musashi to hand over their position in the family register.

Musashi’s family register was managed by the automatons, so any alterations to the documents would be discovered. Instead, they had left the family register untouched and eliminated any contradictions with emotion and convenience. If they remained docile, they were safe as long as their neighbors did not make any complaints. And even if something did happen...

...This mission will only last a few days.

Once it was over, they would leave, just like the original residents had done.

The rear long block lift came into view. She saw some work gods of war and linked wagons among the open warehouses and wooden containers. Some people were already starting down on the lift.

Thankfully, one did not need to be a student to join the engine division. The group was generally divided by sex and there were some buffering layers, but conveniently, there was no division by age.

As Nezu had told her to, Isa walked over to the manager standing in front of the lift.

“Oh.”

The man in a lab coat was Mishina Shouichi, representative of the Ariake. He had a sign frame open as he provided an explanation to everyone.

“Today, we will continue from yesterday and perform the final adjustments to Musashino’s power system. The star of this remodeling was the output conversion mechanism. It was only at the virtual experiment stage before, but it

was originally a more ‘peaceful’ mechanism meant to provide safe passage when an unexpected harmonic territory became a barrier. It was originally manufactured and planned to be added in thirty years ago, but that plan was stopped. It has been occasionally refined since then, but the most recent refinement was based on the Musashi as of last year. There should be slight errors due to the repairs the Musashi has undergone after the armada battle and Mikatagahara, so each team needs to make some final adjustments for that.”

“Judge.”

Isa approached them as they all nodded. When she joined a few of the others who were running late, a worker standing next to the Ariake’s representative called out to her.

“Asa-Shoot 5”

“Devastating flash.”

The worker likely doubled as a guard. When she provided the answer Yuri had given her, the worker gestured for her to board the lift. However, Isa asked him a question.

“I was hired as a day laborer, so is there a team that needs a spot filled?”

“Eh? Well, on Oume... Oh, they’ve already started. Um...”

While the worker hesitated, a girl called over from the lift.

“Can you perform the physical wiring for databank control? I could use someone who can read the knots.”

“Well, it’s not my specialty, but I can do it.”

“Then come over here.”

Isa walked over and felt a little bad when the people on the lift raised a hand in greeting.

“Oh, that’s too far. Over here.”

Someone called to her from the right.

Isa was short, but this girl was even shorter. She wore a worn-out lab coat over

a Qing-Takeda uniform and she shook her ponytail as she smiled.

“With the databank control, we’re linking the other teams’ adjustments to provide some feedback, so I want as many people as I can get. ...I’m Mishina Hiro, leader of Team 5. What about you?”

Isa guessed this girl was the daughter of that IZUMO VIP and the underclassman of Musashi’s 6th Special Duty Officer. *I need to be careful for a variety of reasons*, she thought, but formed a smile regardless.

“I’m Isami. I don’t have a family name. Do you have some work for me?”

“Plenty, plenty.”

Hiro’s smile grew as she raised her gloved hand inside her lab coat pocket and faced Shouichi.

“Dad, we’re good to go over here, so hurry up and take us down.”

“Okay, then your dad’s gonna go all out.”

With that, they all quickly lowered their hips. *Eh?* wondered Isa.

“!?”

The lift descended so quickly she thought the floor had fallen away.

“Wow.”

There was an instant of acceleration that felt like floating, but Isa kept her balance and saw everything flowing upwards around her.

People were working in the residential and transportation districts of the long block being constructed. The aroma of cooking reached her as they passed by the residential district.

...They’ve made a lot of progress on the remodeling!

Hiro crouched next to her and looked up at the hole growing more distant above. Isa wondered what the girl was looking at, but she saw a smile on the corners of Hiro’s mouth.

Hiro’s smile clearly grew as more levels of construction and framework came

into view.

“Heh heh,” she laughed. “I love the Musashi’s stacked structure.”

Chapter 21: Uncertain Person in the Early Morning

第二十一章

『未明の不明人』



かつての不備
かつての思い
今のまどろみ
配点（後悔）

Former inadequacy

Former thoughts

Current slumber

Point Allocation (Regret)

Asama awoke to the distant sound of a morning bell ringing at the top of the hour.

She could tell she was lying on her side and she could tell where she was lying.

“...Nn.”

She was on a bed. Beyond the warm sheets and creaking bed, her sleepy mind heard the distant sounds of construction. And...

...Oh, no. I need to do my morning water purification.

That thought led her to a realization: didn't she normally sleep in a futon? The night before, she had stayed at the Main Blue Thunder late into the night for their meeting. When Kimi had invited her to sleep over, her weariness had won out.

“———!”

She trembled, stirred, opened her eyes, and found a face in front of her.

...Toori-kun!?

She gasped in disbelief, but then realized who it was sleeping on their side in front of her.

“Mito...”

Mitotsudaira breathed quietly in sleep with her sleeves removed and her inner suit parted at the crotch portion. And occasionally...

“Sniff...”

Her sense of smell must have been reacting to the scent of the sheets and blanket because she would rub her cheek against them, relax her expression, and yet generally give stern looks.

...Toori-kun must be causing her trouble in her dream too.

That thought brought some unease.

...Where's Toori-kun?

He was not here.

“—————”

It made sense. They had stolen his space to sleep.

But his absence still bothered her.

...Is he here?

When they had borrowed his bed, he had been making tea and some late night snacks while speaking with Masazumi, Shirojiro, and the others continuing the meeting. Asama had stayed with them until Tenzou, Mary, Gin, and Muneshige had left along with Horizon since they were all residents of Tama's underground area, but...

“Toori-kun...”

His absence brought unease to her heart.

...I'm imagining awful things again.

She corrected her fear. He was in the house. He definitely was. He had to be. There was no reason for him not to be. But...

“...”

Asama slowly got up while looking over at Mitotsudaira who remained asleep with the sheets wildly strewn around her.

She glanced around and confirmed that this was his room. She would occasionally help Kimi with some spells or studying and she would bring by cooking spell charms from her father, so she was familiar with the Aoi home.

...But it's been a while since I was inside Toori-kun's room.

His room had originally been part of a twelve square meter living room. It had been connected to the hallway without any walls, so a T-shape of curtains had

been added in. The space positioned next to the café area was Toori's room and the opposite space was Kimi's room.

Asama stood barefoot on the wooden flooring. She could see plenty of porn game boxes stacked up on the PC desk, but...

"Oh, that's one of the ones I tested for safety. So he's actually playing them."

She nodded in satisfaction that her efforts were paying off.

...W-wait, there's something wrong with this! Oh, but he actually has the nunchuck device connected! Is shaking it up and down really supposed to be fun!?

She had shaken it a lot while testing it. But...

"Kimi...?"

She pushed aside the dividing curtain to check Kimi's room.

Kimi was sleeping inside. She was naked, wrapped in her blanket, and embracing Suzu, who had also slept over, and Suzu's unbound hair. They almost looked like mother and child.

...Although Kimi's the one holding onto Suzu.

Seeing that brought some peace of mind, but the previous unease only grew.

...Where is Toori-kun?

She pushed aside the curtain bordering the hallway and peeked out.

The hallway continued to the left and right. The left led to the bath and the right led to Toori's parents' room and the café.

The left seemed deserted, as did the right.

...He wouldn't be in his mom's room.

After some hesitation, she opened the curtain and stepped out into the hallway. She thought about putting on her shoes, but she would be doing her habitual water purification afterwards anyway. She was only checking to see if he was here.

She placed her hand on the door to the café.

“...”

She hesitated and wondered what she would do if he was not in here.

“He is, isn’t he?”

She recalled a time in the past when she had felt this same unease.

...Back when we lost Horizon...

Toori had also been taken to Mikawa, so he too had been gone.

Asama had not seen the scene of the accident, so at the time, she had not known what exactly had happened to Horizon or Toori. It had generally been the same for the others. They had later learned that Horizon had “died” and everyone but Kimi had cried once they realized what that meant.

...But we didn’t know what had happened to Toori-kun.

Kimi, the one who had not cried, had asked something of Asama not long after that.

“Come stay at my house,”

Asama’s father had apparently decided it would be better for Kimi to come stay at the Asama Shrine, but...

“There has to be someone there when Toori gets back.”

Kimi had been insistent. And Asama herself had been worried about a lot and had also been interested in staying over at the Aoi home that she had visited a lot in the past. Before entering elementary school, her father had been busy a lot and she had often spent the night there with Kimi, Toori, and later Horizon too. The four of them had brought futons out into the café and slept on the floor there.

When asking her over, Kimi had said they could make and eat whatever they wanted because her parents were not there.

That had also been an attractive prospect, so she had decided to go.

...But...

It had come on the first night of her stay.

She and Kimi had crawled into the large bed and discussed silly things until they fell asleep. It had come during the time often known as the dead of night.

It was something formless. A great silence and a dark presence.

In the bluish darkness, where only the silhouettes of objects could be seen, she had known that they were the only two in the house. But...

“Is something there?”

The stillness had in fact created a great pressure as if indicating something’s presence. The house had occasionally creaked and the curtains had fluttered a little from the outside air slipping in.

“————”

She had felt like something was there even though no one was there.

She had felt like something inhuman that they could not perceive was watching them. The creaking of the house had seemed like footsteps as it passed through the walls, so she thought it might actually be standing next to the bed looking down at them.

...I really did think that.

The next thing she had known, Kimi had been clinging to her. That was when she had realized why Kimi had asked her to spend the night.

“Hey,” Kimi had whispered. “Do you think Horizon is here?”

She had not been able to say no. Honoring the souls of the dead was one of a shrine maiden’s jobs.

There were different categories and levels of ghosts and there had been some her young self had been unable to perceive even with Konoha, the false eye she had had even back then.

What were they supposed to do if something like that had been there? And then Kimi had said more.

“Or maybe it’s Toori.”

Without knowing the answer, she had clung to Kimi and cried.

She had been unable to irresponsibly say he would be coming back and she had not known if the silence and darkness surrounding them really had been something visiting them.

...But I had to wonder if we had lost Toori-kun who had always played with us and been like family to me.

What if the silent presence really was his dead ghost?

What if it was proof that they would never meet him again?

What if he had vanished before they could do or say anything? And what if he had become something that was simply *there*, unable to be say anything or touch anything.

“—————”

Asama had slept over after that as well and she remembered the one time she had worked up the courage to search the house.

After hearing the house creaking, she had gone out into the hallway to open the door to the café. She remembered the creaking having been loud enough to make her think Toori might have returned.

...But he wasn't there.

She had opened the door and found the café empty. She had found nothing that could have caused the creaking.

But despite seeing no one there, she had sensed a presence.

“Toori-kun...?”

Had he died and come there?

But she had not known if he was there or not, so...

“If you're there, then come back properly...Toori-kun.”

Only after speaking had she realized how weak her voice was. She had received high praise for her performance in her shrine maiden training (and thunderous praise for her skill at shooting), but conversing with the souls of the dead was dangerous.

...So I hadn't been allowed to do it at that point.

When she had realized there was nothing she could do, she had returned to Kimi's bed and the two of them had placed the blanket over their heads.

"...I'm sorry."

What had she been apologizing for?

...For the fact that I couldn't do anything to bring Toori-kun back, to stop him from going away in the first place, or...

To do anything for him.

She remembered him being a handful. He had caused nothing but trouble. He had often had her heal injuries or apologize to people, so he had been something of a nuisance.

But the biggest trouble of all was not being able to do anything for him.

"I'm sorry..."

From then on, they had left the lights on when they slept and left the blanket pulled down a little from Toori's bed. That was to make the silence more bearable and to make it easier for Toori to get into bed when he returned.

He had returned a while later, but he had become another person entirely.

...I remember not understanding what was happening.

But they definitely had "lost him" for a time and she had been unable to do anything for him during that time.

"Is he here now?"

What should she do if he was not beyond this door now?

She opened it.

The Main Blue Thunder was dimly lit by the artificial sunlight entering through the narrow window.

They had all had fun and discussed a number of things the night before and the smell of eaten pizza lingered inside. But...

"Oh? You're up early, Asama. Did we wake you?"

“Good morning. We started eating already.”

“Oh, you want something to eat too, Asama?”

She saw three people there: Masazumi, Mary, and...

“If you need to do your water purification, our bath supports spells, so put in a purification spell and use it. Sis will probably unlock the door and interrupt, though.”

He was there and he spoke to her.

Asama was relieved by that fact, but she did her best to keep it from showing. After all, Masazumi and Mary were here as well. She started by interpreting what the idiot had said.

“D-don’t be ridiculous...”

She imagined the scene of Kimi interrupting while she was in the bath and she felt some heat in her cheeks.

Then Mary gave her a smile while cutting into an omelet with a knife.

“Lady Asama, you get along quite well with Lady Kimi and the spirit, don’t you?”

She wondered who “the spirit” was, but she decided to abandon that line of thought when the idiot puffed his chest out proudly. However, she did take a breath and released the tension from her shoulders.

...Honestly...

Good, she thought. This isn’t like ten years ago.

“Toori-kun?”

“Yeah? What is it? Boobs? You want even more than you’ve got?”

She didn’t know what he was talking about, but she did know he was there.

Never again would she not know what had happened to him and never again would no one be able to reach a hand out to him or head out to save him.

Good, she thought again.

...Ah.

Drawn by her relaxed shoulders, droplets spilled from the corners of her eyes.

She unexpectedly began crying.

When the other three noticed, Masazumi was the first to speak.

“Aoi, what did you do to Asama!? She’s Musashi’s valuable long-distance attacker, divine transmission manager, and owner of my Tsukinowa! As the lessee, I’ll be forced to use my special attack: That is Most Regrettable!”

“That’s way too long, Seijun! A-and I didn’t do anything! I mean, did you see me do anything!? Hey, Asama, I didn’t do anything to you, right? Please tell them I didn’t.”

“No, that isn’t it, is it?” Mary gestured to the empty seat in front of her. “I don’t really know why, but something made you happy, didn’t it?”

Asama nearly nodded at that quiet question, but...

...W-wait, if I agree, they’ll ask me what made me happy.

She had recalled the past, compared it to the present, and involuntarily been so overcome with relief that she cried. They would not understand and it would be too embarrassing even if they did.

“Um,” she hesitated. “S-sorry, Mary. I need to do my water purification before eating, a-and I didn’t put any shoes on, so, um...”

“Sure. I’ll make you something that should be ready at about the right time, so hurry on up.”

Why did he read so much into things in the weirdest ways? At any rate, Asama used his words as the cue she needed to turn around, but...

“Um, what are we doing today? Are we having a meeting before going to school?”

“Judge. We need to decide who to send out as ambassadors. At the earliest, they could be sent out today, so I want to get that done now. ...Now, Mary. Where are Crossunite and the Tachibanas?”

“Master Tenzou had some thoughts about the attack last night, so he went

out to examine the site. Master and Lady Tachibana were summoned by Principal Sakai.”

“By Principal Sakai?”

“Judge.” Mary tilted her head. “He apparently said he had an idea to strengthen Musashi’s fighting force.”

“Well, anyway, it’s pretty exciting gathering three people with peerless combat skill.”

Sakai sat on the veranda of his home, pulled his hand from his pocket to rub his chin, and smiled.

“Oh, no need to be so formal. At ease, Muneshige-kun, Gin-kun.”

“Judge,” said Gin and Muneshige who were wearing track suits. They adjusted their sitting position on the gravel by lifting their feet on their toes to gently lift their hips. They also straightened their backs.

“What do you need with us today?” asked Gin.

Sakai looked to their left where Futayo sat more flatly with her shoulders pulled in tight.

“Da’s Daughter-kun, are you sure you want to reject my offer?”

“Eh?” asked Futayo before correcting it to, “Yes.”

She lifted up the Tonbo Spare sitting next to her.

“I have this already.” She seemed to be trying to convince herself more than anyone. “Using this to its fullest is my path.”

“Judge. I had a feeling you would say that and I’m relieved that you did.”

Sakai turned his smile back to the Tachibana Couple.

“Now, since the Vice Chancellor says she doesn’t need it, let’s get down to business. ...I have something nice for you. ‘Musashi’-san.”

He held a hand back toward the room behind him where “Musashi” stood.

“You mean this?”

“Musashi” stacked up five unopened black disk box sets in Sakai’s hand and ignored how he nearly lost his balance.

“Honestly, I found all of these while searching through the closet. What is this Pax Sentai Five Good Emperors? Partway through, they added more to the team to gain a total of five, but why did they say, ‘I just realized we have three ‘Anus’s! Together, we’re the Five Good Emperors!’? That does not even function as a mnemonic for one’s exams. Over.”

“Yeah, and the first one is ‘Janus’ so it’s actually pronounced ‘Yanus’ instead. Oh, but I bought this and that previous one with points at the same Roman Fair, so I didn’t spend any money on them. And could I get some more tea? No?”

“More importantly, I assume this is what you meant. Over.”

“Musashi” glanced over at Sakai as she stepped from the veranda into the yard and slipped on the sandals waiting there.

“The transfer has not yet been fully made, so you can only look for the time being. Over.”

She held something horizontal to the ground: a steel spear.

“This is Kamenuki, the quasi-divine weapon Sakai-sama used in his days as a student. Over.”

Gin spoke as she looked at the spear that measured more than two meters long.

“Kamenuki? Isn’t that name based on the story in which you stabbed through a pot in an enemy castle to stab the enemy hidden behind it?”

But...

“To be blunt, there are a lot of similar names out there.”

“That’s unavoidable, Gin,” said Muneshige. “Commanders and swordsmen of the Warring States period are pitif-...valuable creatures that cannot resist slicing, cutting, and stabbing through things. Pots, bamboo, and stones are the usual victims, but there are plenty of variations such as one powerful example of slicing a go board in two.”

“Come to think of it, my Tonbokiri is a type of animal abuse.”

“No, Tonbokiri’s name is based on a dragonfly cutting itself by landing on the blade. Let’s calm down and classify these things properly, Musashi Vice Chancellor.”

“Sakai-sama, are you hearing what they are saying about you? Over.”

“Now, now.” The corner of Sakai’s mouth rose in a smile. “Muneshige-kun, do you want this?”

“You’re willing to part with it?”

Despite his question, Muneshige had already started standing, so Sakai smiled.

“I am, but first I’d like a bit of excitement.”

“...A test?”

“The two of you can work together if you want. Oh, but I’m not your opponent. I wouldn’t want anything unfortunate to happen. I don’t like pain, you see. So...”

Sakai clapped his hands and a tall maid appeared in the middle of the yard.

She was an automaton and Gin knew her name.

“You are Lady ‘Asakusa’, aren’t you?”

“Judge. I am here as captain of the first ship.”

She did not say “over” here. Her short hair swayed and she pulled something from her waist hard point.

“This is a Mikawa gravity sword. I will be using it as the opponent in your test. Over.”

Chapter 22: Skilled One in the Foggy Yard

第二十二章

『霧立つ庭の冴え者』



それは前進を遮り
しかし止めぬもの
配点 (テンション)

What blocks the way forward

Yet does not stop you

Point Allocation (Excitement)

Two people stood on a gravel-covered yard.

One was a male student in a track suit.

“I am Tachibana Muneshige. ...Please give me my test.”

The other was “Asakusa”, an automaton in a maid uniform.

“As captain automaton of the first ship, I shall provide your examination.
Over.”

A short distance away, Gin stood by the house with the large hands of her false arms raised. Ether light spread like ripples and an emblem opened inside a torii-style sign frame. Then...

<Catholic technique approval aboard Musashi: Approval given via the Asama Shrine: Confirmed> Next, a Catholic emblem appeared over the previous one and long swords grew from it. They were the twin swords meant for Gin’s false arms, but...

“Master Muneshige, take these.”

She removed the attachment connecting their hilts and tossed them to Muneshige. It was a casual movement, but the false arms sent them slicing through the wind on a collision course with the boy.

The swords rotated with twin sounds of scratching at the air, but just when they were going to hit Muneshige...

“Thank you, Gin.”

They vanished. No, “Asakusa” turned her head to follow them while facing him.

They were up above. The two swords were spinning with the Ariake’s ceiling behind them.

“Did you place your hands on them and throw them in the moment of collision? Over.”

“No. That was no collision. It was the Tachibana-style ‘hand-delivery’. After all...we can’t have anyone else stealing them. Normally I would have grabbed them, but in this case...”

The next pair came. That is, a third and fourth sword. He grabbed these two directly and set them on his waist hard points with a snap of his wrists. As they clicked into place, he raised his hands toward the sky where the first and second swords fell.

“Now I grab them to complete my preparations. What do you think?”

“I have determined it was well done. Over.”

With that assessment, “Asakusa” lowered her hands to the left and right. Both hands held a bladeless sword hilt and guard, but a white fog began to rise from the end. The fog floated out yet nothing appeared in the center. And that nothingness seemed to form a blade.

The blades were sixty centimeters long, but...

“The Musashi’s first port and starboard ships were accepted as transport ships before being officially added, but that is why I have determined we are loved by the residents of Musashi. However...”

However...

“The Musashi’s first port and starboard ships always exist at the lead of the Musashi’s course, direction, and guidance. So...”

So...

“The Musashi’s first port and starboard ships carry the role of the Musashi’s guardians. We provide supplies and set the course, but more than simply advance, we are the guardians who cut open the way forward. So...”

The word “so” was accompanied by a change to the gravity swords’ lengths.

The automaton’s own gravitational control increased the pressure, transforming the thickness and length of the two swords. The invisible blades grew past two meters in the center of the fog.

“These Mikawa gravity swords are known as Kirihiiraki^[2] and were made exclusively for automaton use. ...I have been unable to use them as it is a bit of a gray area whether they would qualify as a weapon for the Musashi, but I have received permission to use them for the purposes of training our own. Over.”

“You consider me one of your own?” asked Muneshige.

“Judge.” “Asakusa” stepped forward. “Any resident of the Musashi matters greatly to us. Over.”

With that one step, the automaton erased all distance between her and Muneshige.

Muneshige watched his opponent’s movements.

This was his first time battling an automaton.

She resembled a human yet was not one. The gravitational control was one issue, but she also mechanically controlled her body, meaning she could ignore pain and move her joints beyond the movable range for a human.

The only real downside was the essential lack of what was known as a “mind” despite being able to make a series of decisions. That meant she could only use the spells built into her own functionality or ones that used external Blessings.

However, automatons were devoted to their duty and defined their lives on whether they could fulfill those duties or not.

The closest analogy would be a knight that believed in using primarily physical attacks.

She interested him.

“Asakusa” was currently leaping to his front right side. She was leaning forward and using the gravity sword in her right hand.

The gravel crunched as the first attack arrived.

Instead of taking a wide swing, she kept her right elbow on her side and...

...She’s spinning her arm!?

The blade was raised in front of her chest and he assumed she would swing it

outwards like a backhand blow.

But she did not.

Her forearm rotated. From Muneshige's perspective, her forearm rotated without issue in the counter clockwise direction and it stopped in the eight o'clock position. That motion would have been impossible for a human.

She made an upwards diagonal slash from there.

Muneshige moved back. He observed his opponent's movements, saw through them, and moved back as a reference for his future evasive actions.

"Whoops."

He took a left step back to dodge. He did not move much. Moving too far away would give his opponent an easier time of setting her sights on him and make it easier for her to target his arms or legs. He kept as close as possible so that she could only target his torso.

His feet crunched on the gravel as he put that slight distance between them.

From his perspective, "Asakusa's" first attack travelled from the lower left to the upper right. Moving left put him toward her back as she swung her right arm.

He watched her movements while moving around behind her. He spotted the waste in how she shifted her weight and placed her feet.

...Is this...?

He noticed something.

"...!?"

Immediately, her right arm made another attack.

It came suddenly, and...

...Her back!?

Her right arm mobilized both her right shoulder and right shoulder blade to stab at him behind her. As if to say her back was her chest, the arm bent at an angle far too deep for a human, yet still sent the blade accurately to its target.

She did not hesitate to target his face, so he evaded. He started to step back from the stabbing blade.

“...!”

Muneshige gave up on stepping back and accelerated leftward instead. He moved further behind “Asakusa”. He first swung his head and then his body took a leap to follow.

That decision saved him.

“Asakusa” had let go of the stabbing sword.

The attack to his face was launched like a bullet and tore deep into the spot his face had just vacated.

Still, he had dodged it.

He used all his strength to circle around behind her.

“Oh.”

Then he noticed that his enemy’s attack was not yet over.

The released right sword stopped in midair and was pulled back in.

“Please wait. You forgot something. Over.”

“Asakusa’s” left arm and shoulder blade rotated to her back as if to embrace her own back and as if to intercept him. And that arm’s Kirihiraki had already been swung.

It was a diagonal counterattack against him as he circled behind her.

Even if he tried to dodge, this automaton could continue moving her arm for a full 360 degrees. Her sweeping sword would surely reach him and stab into him even if he moved back and away. Also...

“My apologies. It was very un-automaton-like of me to confront you without facing you. Over.”

“Asakusa” rotated her head so it too faced the back.

The movement of her left arm did not waver as it targeted Muneshige.

Also, the other Kirihiraki had been pulled back to her right hand.

“...!”

Her right hand sent the gravity sword in to attack him from behind. The elbow instantly reversed its bend in a whip-like motion that sent it toward her left arm’s counterattack.

“You will be trapped in the middle. Over.”

The left and right attacks were at different heights, so they would surely strike him at the chest and waist.

...But she’s sure to adjust if I try to evade either up or down!

While that would be possible for a human, it would be quite forceful. It could easily damage the arm. But this automaton could do so while ignoring the joints, muscles, and tendons.

In that case, in which direction was he supposed to evade?

“———”

Muneshige made his decision. The situation was completely different, but the action he was about to take was one someone had once used on him.

...Back at Mikawa!

Futayo saw what action Muneshige took.

...Is that...?

He casually walked up “Asakusa”.

“Excuse me.”

With those words, he leaned forward and placed a foot on her rear-facing waist.

“———”

He almost seemed to be climbing a standard staircase.

It was a light action with no weight to it. And...

...That is what I did to him at Mikawa!

Her acceleration spell, Soaring Wings, purified any impeding factors to raise her speed. When she activated the spell cumulatively to raise its level, any obstacles would be no different from level ground and even charging attacks could become a stepping stone if she timed it right.

Because she could use that technique, she had done so during their duel at Mikawa.

...But Muneshige-dono is not using a spell!

This was pure skill. He had pulled it off with nothing but martial arts and physical strength.

“Kh...”

She groaned at the comparison she subconsciously made.

She also heard Sakai asking Gin a question by the house.

“Gin-kun, he’s controlling his weight, isn’t he?”

“Judge. His balance has always been one of his strong points. He could never stand on a blade or jump straight while kicking off the dust in the air if he did not have a skilled sense of balance.”

Muneshige passed over “Asakusa’s” shoulder and dropped down on the other side.

Futayo heard Gin give a sigh of relief.

“He has been training his physical abilities and balance by climbing walls or using unsteady footing such as the Musashi’s outer edges and the thick rope passageways. He has needed to maintain his health in that manner after the lost income of having his inherited name removed. Also...” Gin narrowed her eyes. “Well, what I have done does not matter here. Even this has yet to reach the ideal we both desire.”

“I see,” replied “Musashi”.

She watched Muneshige land while sitting on the veranda next to Sakai.

“But our first ship captain is also quite impressive. Over.”

“I have a general understanding of that. And of what is to come.” Gin

corrected her expression. “Do as you wish. That is what Master Muneshige would want.”

As soon as Gin said that, Futayo felt a chill.

...Fog?

A thin fog floated through the air while carrying some frost.

What is going on? she wondered just before noticing something.

“Asakusa” took two actions after Muneshige stepped over her.

“Asakusa” moved.

...Here I go!

As her two attacks had been avoided, she rotated her arms from the back to the front and then embraced her own body.

The embrace was meant to straighten her up and turn her toward Muneshige, but she did not stop there.

“———”

Something flew from her sleeves: two additional swords.



“浅草”

However, those were not the only new Kirihiraki blades. Twenty-four short gravity swords left her skirt and apron and four large ones appeared from the air.

“A total of thirty-two. I have located a stable pathway for the power supply, so please provide your assistance. Over.”

They all rapidly released fog.

The entire area was dyed white, the air cooled, and “Asakusa” turned toward Muneshige.

As expected, he was trying to turn toward her after walking over her and landing, but she was no longer wielding even a single blade. All of her weapons were targeting him from the air thanks to her gravitational control.

This normally would have been impossible. She would not have been able to control so many distinct objects or provide the power for them. And even if she did pull it off, the burden would have been great enough to hinder her later duties. This was only possible because...

...“*Shinagawa*”!

That automaton was the other first ship captain. That identical model was helping her through their shared memory. More than just the data from her sight, hearing, and bodily balance, data on Muneshige’s movements was being sent from the sensory devices on the ship.

As a result, she only had to focus on moving. And...

“...!”

The burden of controlling and powering the four large swords and twenty-eight small ones was shared with “Shinagawa”.

She did not consider this unfair. The port and starboard ships were a pair and thus the same. The automatons commanding them were identical models, so they were more closely connected to each other than to the other captain automatons.

That was why she had never said their opponent would be “Asakusa”.

She had always said it would be...

...The first ship captain!

“Asakusa” spread her arms, grabbed and twisted at the air, and used her gathered strength to move the total of thirty-two blades.

“Here I go.”

She understood that this was a test, but that was why she had to test them with her full power. After all...

“In the future, Musashi will need guardians and protectors who bear new power.”

So she spoke once more.

“Show the way, Kirihiraki! Spell of the guardians who captain the first ships! Over.”

Formless blades tore into the surrounding fog and faced Muneshige.

Muneshige leaped.

He moved away. This was a change from before, but...

...This is dangerous!

He was faced with a large number of bladeless swords and their lengths could change at will with their reinforced power.

“———!!”

The fog was torn apart as if by rain in the spot he had just vacated. The white color spread out, tore apart, and gave a brief glimpse of “Asakusa” on the other side.

“!?”

One of the large swords broke through the fog and flew his way.

He ducked to dodge it and then jumped left from that lowered position. After all...

...Gravitational control!

The large sword had stopped over his head and then dropped straight down.

He escaped left while low enough to the ground for his hands to scrape at the gravel.

A further attack arrived. As “Asakusa” swung her arm, sixteen small swords flew his way like a splash of water. Also...

“How about this? Over.”

A second large sword flew over the splash of swords.

This was the worst attack for him in his lowered position.

He could not completely dodge the swinging swords by moving either right or left, but the large sword awaited him if he tried to dodge upwards. And he was leaning too far forward to jump backwards to gain more distance.

He thought he could make it if he ducked below the splash of swords, but...

“The gravel!”

His footing was covered in round gravel. If he poured too much strength into his step, it could easily shift and throw off his movement.

In that case, he thought.

I have to go for it regardless.

Now what will he do? wondered Sakai.

He watched Muneshige facing the blades while thinking that the boy had to overcome this. If he did not...

...He'll have trouble being one of the main fighters supporting Musashi.

And, he thought while preparing to accept whatever he would see here.

...What about you, Da's Daughter-kun?

He had a certain thought about Futayo: *You're going to have to rival everything you're about to see here*, After all, they were the Peerless in the East and West, and more importantly...

“You’re still nothing more than ‘Da-chan’s daughter’.”

Sakai narrowed his eyes as Muneshige relaxed his body and leaned further

forward.

...Is he going for it?

Will you show me the starting line for the boy I think might just retake the name of the Peerless in the West?

So...

“———”

Sakai raised both hand, cupped them, and clapped them together.

...Now, you two.

“Begin.”

As if that was his cue, Muneshige took off.

“Asakusa” saw it through the dancing fog she was parting and through the sensors that she and “Shinagawa” were monitoring.

...Eh?

The large sword had slammed into the gravel and the sixteen small swords had stabbed into it, but...

...Tachibana-sama is not there.

He had vanished. No, there was something there. A small light was scattering in the space filled by the fog and multiple gravity swords. It was ether light, which meant...

“ ‘Asakusa’! To your left!”

“Asakusa” ran toward him on the left before even turning. “Shinagawa” was tracking his location, so she only had to make the quickest attack possible. But...

“ ‘Asakusa’! The enemy has changed course!”

In an instant, eighty-four possible enemy attack patterns were sent to her. “Shinagawa” used the high speed decisions of an automaton to narrow them down to the most likely one, so...

“#7! You can make a counterattack!”

“Asakusa” followed “Shinagawa’s” instructions by allowing her knees to collapse. She released the knee joint to drop forward by the height of the knee joint. She also sent her left sword to the location in “Shinagawa’s” instructions.

She felt the blow land.

A moment later, something passed over her head from the left to the right.

She could only perceive it as “wind”. In fact, it was a “powerful wind”.

Her senses were rattled by the gust and her visual data contained the inexactness of corrected footage.

But that complication only lasted a moment. The footage soon recovered.

“Well done, ‘Shinagawa’,” she said quietly because of what fell onto the yard in front of her. “That is Tachibana-sama’s sword blade. ...If I had not broken it off in that reflexive interception, I have determined I would have been beheaded.”

“ ‘Asakusa’ ...?”

“Judge. What is it?”

“Well, that means you are leaving all of the sensory duties to me. In that case, please look to your right.”

“Asakusa” looked to the right and found her glove was missing.

...What?

She quickly realized that the removed glove was sitting on her right shoulder.

But that was not all.

Something else had been added onto her shoulder: the hair decoration sensory assistance device that had been attached to her head.

“———”

“Asakusa” was dumbfounded as she placed her bared right hand on her shoulder.

Her hair decoration was the symbol of a maid, but it had been removed and placed on her shoulder along with the glove.

He had to have done that while passing by just now.

It was a warning.

An automaton's gravitational control was mostly controlled by the motions of their hands and arms, but...

...He is warning me that he can interfere with that.

Removing the hair decoration was the same. He was warning her that he could interfere with her identity as a maid automaton.

...I see.

She turned right while checking the data sent by "Shinagawa".

Muneshige had landed about thirty meters away after scraping a long line in the gravel. He held the broken sword forward in his right hand and placed that hand on the ground to lean toward her.

He was telling her he could begin at any moment, but he remained motionless so it would act as a warning to her.

He was saying now was the time to stop him.

But "Asakusa" demonstrated a certain answer.

She placed the hair decoration sensory assistance device on the ground.

"Let us continue. Over."

She then took the glove from her shoulder and threw it between the two of them.

"Now, show me what you did to avoid my previous attack. After all, I am your tester, but..."

Prepared to be ashamed, she returned all the swords to herself.

"Please show me the power of our new guardian. Over."

"Asakusa" and "Shinagawa" sent their full power toward Muneshige.

An automaton had stopped moving her mop on the front deck of the first starboard ship.

It was “Shinagawa”.

Around her, the other maid automatons were still cleaning, but she had closed her eyes.

...I must make corrections.

She was sending data to “Asakusa” who was holding a test battle on Okutama. She was computing the speed and distance of the movement techniques that Muneshige had used while also taking his martial arts balance into account.

“ ‘Shinagawa’, create a valley of fog and send the swords through the center.”

“Shinagawa” determined the path Muneshige would likely take: the direct straight-line path.

She had determined he would not choose a roundabout path during this test. She had determined he preferred to run straight forward and that he would consider the answer that provided as the appropriate answer to this test.

So the two automatons prepared a single test question for him.

They would counterattack using all thirty-two swords. They would detect his movements, attacks, and all other actions and then send out their attack to accurately interfere with them. And to do that...

“Please come, challenger.”

Muneshige determined the blades were prepared in defense.

The gravity sword fog was prepared somewhat low in an iai-like arrangement.

“Here I go!”

He poured definite speed into himself.

In an instant, “Asakusa” realized Muneshige had made it halfway through the Kirihiraki blades.

...He’s fast!

Automaton decisions were generally a thousand times faster than a human’s

thoughts, and they could reach nearly a million times faster at the greatest, but there was one thing they had trouble with at any speed: a never-before-seen situation.

They had no prepared countermeasure for it. They could list up a number of possibilities, but they would have no idea what was best. Muneshige's speed was so great it reached that "unknown" level for "Asakusa" and "Shinagawa".

For speed alone, they could reference the aerial movement spells of aerial ships and the Technohexen, but there was a difference for Muneshige.

"That is an original spell!"

Torii-style emblems were appearing and disappearing on the back of his heels.

They had no data on this spell that he used to accelerate.

"Is that...?"

Something seemed off to Futayo.

This was definitely an original Shinto spell, but that would make it the same as her Soaring Wings.

...A Shinto acceleration spell should be appearing ahead of his movement!

Shinto used purification spells. The acceleration spells functioned by purifying all that was unnecessary, so they would purify away any element in one's path that was obstructing their acceleration. That was why Soaring Wings appeared on the front of her knees and top of her feet.

But for Muneshige, it was appearing below the toes and heel of his feet.

"———!"

She saw him accelerate as if digging into the spell with his feet.

This was strange.

Each individual step looked slow, but for some reason he was fast.

"It is only at the experimental phase, but it seems to be working well," said Gin while staring at him. "Recreating the Catholic acceleration spell in the Shinto

style proved impossible due to the fundamentally different way of thinking. But he prefers to gain a powerful acceleration when he presses down his feet. That is different from the Shinto-style that provides speed as you move your legs forward.”

So...

“We had a thought: If we wished for the type of acceleration made impossible by the Shinto style, we would ignore the rules of Shinto acceleration spells. And...”

And...

“It began to look like we could create one after all. Rather than purifying what lies ahead, it erases the impurities in the footing he uses to accelerate. This is the reverse acceleration spell known as Racing Toes.”

Gin watched Muneshige run.

He was using the Racing Toes spell to do so, but it provided no acceleration at all on its own.

It acted on the location set as his acceleration footing and erased any impurities that would obstruct his acceleration. That way, he could build up his acceleration with each step he took.

That was all the spell did.

It had originally been a spell used when laying a keystone. It had been designed to make an object immovable.

The spell had two objectives: to create footing that would provide one with reliable acceleration and to let them build up that acceleration.

The acceleration one acquired from the footing was reliant on the individual’s own leg strength.

So what would happen if someone with great leg strength continued using it, step after step?

If that was all they did, they would be unable to control the built-up power and

would eventually be blown away by it.

But what if they also had the balance needed to control that power?

There was one person who could do everything needed to answer that question.

...Master Muneshige.

His original leg strength had yet to return, but the balance built up by climbing walls and using poor footing allowed him to maintain control over the leg strength he did have.

It was not perfect yet. Both the accuracy of the spell and his own body could use work.

He was inexperienced in this regard.

But once he perfected it, he was sure to reach the top speed allowed by the god of his contract.

That was why Gin shouted to him as he ran through the foggy blades.

“Do your best, Master Muneshige!”

A moment later, the fog moved.

“Asakusa” had been unable to react to Muneshige’s initial speed, so she only now began her interception. She pulled back the blades he had already passed, and...

“...!”

Attacks and counterattacks assaulted him as a series of high-speed movements.

Muneshige made a single decision.

Gravity swords were arriving from behind, the sides, below, above, and ahead.

He could not defend against those blades with his own swords. They were an invisible manifestation of cutting itself.

But he made a decision while continuing onward without fear.

...I must keep my footing firm.

That was all.

Despite the many gravity swords around him, he evaded the invisible blades as they sliced through the fog.

“—————”

He then grabbed one gravity sword hilt.

“...!”

And he kicked at it with Racing Toes to accelerate it.

After a solid sound, the kicked gravity sword shot away from him.

It was light, so that was to be expected.

But that acceleration also pushed his leg forward thanks to Racing Toes. It may have been a small acceleration, but he had already built up quite a bit of speed in his body. So...

“Here I go!”

He focused on dodging as he ran through the gravity sword strikes and toward their source.

...Go.

Muneshige continued forward as if leaping, as if racing, and as if challenging his opponent.

He turned his body around and even flipped upside down as he kicked off the ground and gravity swords to continue forward.

He seemed to be running up a slope.

He swung his entire body around, kicked off the hilts of attacks he had passed, kicked off the guards of the large sword, and raised his speed each and every time. He slipped through the attacks as more blades came his way.

“...!”

He kicked off the base of the guard, tore into it with his toes, and accelerated.

He was always moving forward.

He blew away the whipped-up fog and lovingly thought of each individual piece of gravel as footing for his acceleration.

“Ohhh!”

It's been a while since I yelled like that, he thought.

How long has it been?

...I believe it was...

Mikawa. When he had faced Musashi Provisional Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo at the checkpoint clearing near the Musashi.

He had used his full strength and raised his voice there.

And ever since his defeat there, he had been restraining his full strength. He was not yet fully healed, so he would likely return to quiet training once this battle was over. But...

...For now!

“———!”

He gave a roar and threw his body forward.

He stretched his hand forward.

His accelerated body and scratching hand whipped up the wind and blew the fog away.

This revealed his enemy: “Asakusa”.

As soon as he realized he had arrived, he took a certain action: He accelerated.

“!”

He raised the broken sword in his right hand and charged straight toward “Asakusa”.

“Asakusa” used the two remaining large swords to intercept.

She did not hesitate in the slightest as Muneshige arrived from directly ahead.

“So you are here. Over.”

She sent the two swords forward in a crossed arrangement.

Muneshige did not fear the twin attacks that threatened to slice into his shoulders. He accelerated, but when he sent out his sword, it was not toward “Asakusa”.

It was toward the ground.

That sword in his right hand had broken off halfway up, but he still stabbed into the ground ahead and on his right.

That bearer of acceleration could create footing out of anything, even the blade he had just stabbed into the ground.

After moving his foot over the sword, he stepped on it and raised his speed.

He accelerated forward and instantly slipped below Asakusa’s crossed swords.

This should have placed him right in front of his enemy, but “Asakusa” had moved back.

She had made a shield from the fog whipped up by the crossed large swords, and she had stepped back while leaving the position of the large swords unchanged.

“Asakusa” and “Shinagawa” both understood that this would settle the battle.

“ ‘Asakusa’!”

She understood. Something rotated through the air and arrived in her raised hands.

They were the large swords she had sent out earlier. She had pulled them back through the gap between the crossed swords, caught them in her gravitational control, and sent them straight toward Muneshige as he stood up.

“Here I go! Over.”

However, he avoided the blades dropping vertically toward him.

He had used Racing Toes to kick off of the hilt of one of the previous crossed

large swords.

He moved right, but when “Asakusa” turned in that direction, she saw a second sword stabbed into the ground.

He had used this one as footing as well. The blade was vibrating and the light of the shattered spell surrounded it.

Before she could turn around, Muneshige had stabbed the sword into the ground, kicked off of it, and changed directions.

...Such speed and decisiveness!

“ ‘Asakusa’! Behind you!”

She understood. The two crossed swords had already returned to her hands, so she made her attack entirely based on “Shinagawa’s” instructions.

She released the motors of her shoulders, and let the momentum of raising the two large swords swing them around behind her.

This movement was impossible for a human.

“How about that!? Over!”

Gin saw the final action.

As the two swords were swung down from above, Muneshige first made his preparation.

He removed a sword from his waist, held it horizontally, and threw it toward the bottom of the large swords.

...Is that...?

Gin predicted what he intended to do.

She knew she was right once he swung up his other sword from below.

...Well done!

He struck something, but it was not “Asakusa” or her twin swords.

“The horizontal blade he already threw!!”

Hit from below, the sword hopped upwards in its horizontal orientation.

Immediately afterwards, that blade sliced into something: the guards of the two large swords swinging down toward him.

The horizontal blade embedded itself inside them.

“...!”

He swung up his sword as if pushing up on that horizontal sword.

It was more of a splitting sound than a sound of destruction.

The hilts of the dropping swords broke open near the guard and the gravity swords burst.

The wind broke into pieces.

The invisible blades vanished and produced the sound of scattering wind. The fog whipped up, but Gin still saw Muneshige moving within it. He took action to stop “Asakusa” as she started to turn around.

“Excuse me. I will be removing your power source.”

He used his sword to break the hard points on her neck, sides, and waist.

“...It’s over then.”

Sakai saw the wind whip up and clear away the fog.

“Musashi” spoke expressionlessly as she sat next to him.

“Where will you find the money to repair your yard? Over.”

“Well, it’s my home, so I guess it’ll come from my own pocket...”

“And the principal’s salary comes from the taxes. Over.”

“W-well, it’s my money once it’s been paid to me. ...Right?”

Two figures stood on the large yard: Muneshige who had put away his sword after his attack and “Asakusa” who had finished turning toward him.

As the wind blew, “Asakusa” finally bowed toward Muneshige.

“Sorry for all the trouble. Over.”

“No, no. I should be apologizing.”

Muneshige also bowed and then sat down on the gravel. He crossed his legs and looked up into the sky.

“Sorry, Gin, but do you have anything for me to eat?”

Gin stood up with a bitter smile.

“I only have my usual morning preparations. Will that suffice?”

“Yes, thank you.”

When she saw the smile on his face, she was glad they had come to Musashi.

...In Tres España, he was the wielder of Lype Katathlipse, one of the Eight Great Dragon Kings, and Tachibana Muneshige, Peerless in the West. That put quite a lot of pressure on him.

Even when training with her, he had rarely been so exhausted he sat down on the spot like this. She felt somewhat sad that he was smiling and naturally doing so in front of someone other than her, but...

“Hm? Is something the matter?”

He was also looking her way more often now, so she decided it was for the best. However...

“Master Muneshige, you should not end a battle like that.”

“Eh? ...But the hard point parts control people’s life support spells.”

“Judge,” agreed “Asakusa”. “That can be interpreted as bringing me ‘death’. Over.”

As soon as “Asakusa” said that, the apron and frilly sleeves attached to her hard points were purged.

“...Eh?”

Unable to grasp what had happened, “Asakusa” did not react quickly enough to grab the apron as it briefly floated through the air. Instead, she covered her chest and crotch while crouching down.

“...!? Over.”

This reaction may have been installed in automatons as a type of pattern, but it seemed to be a combination of her rational side and an expression of confusion over the unexpected situation. She had a half-thoughtful look on her face and her cheeks reddened, perhaps due to the heat produced by her racing thoughts.

“Musashi” entered the house and began searching through the dresser for some spare clothing for “Asakusa”. After seeing that, Gin smiled bitterly at Muneshige who was apologizing profusely to crouching “Asakusa”.

Gin stood up and started toward him.

...Eh?

But then she heard a quiet voice that she could not quite make out.

“————”

It was Futayo. She had been sitting next to Gin before, but she had stood up, taken a step back, and bowed.

“I will be leaving now.”

“Okay, Da’s Daughter-kun. I’ll have ‘Musashi’-san send you the information you asked for.”

Sakai gave a quick wave and concluded everything with his words.

“I’m sure you’re all busy, but if you meet the others, make sure to tell them this is the time to push yourselves pretty hard.”

Chapter 23: Inexperienced Thinker in a Blue Place

第二十三章

『青の場の青き思い人』



始まりを告げる合図は
思いがけない事ばかりで
たまに腹が立つんだが
配点（素直に）

The starting signal

Is always something unexpected

Which can sometimes piss me off

Point Allocation (Be Honest)

A certain space was completely empty.

It was a room. The window gave a view of Musashi Ariadust Academy's schoolyard and the land bridge leading to the entrance.

It was the student council room at the front of the academy's third floor. The sign frames emulating the morning sun illuminated two figures inside the room.

One was Ookubo in a Far Eastern girl's uniform, apron, and bandanna on the head. The other was Kanou who was similarly dressed. Ookubo pushed her glasses back into place and looked across the entire room.

"Now, that should be enough cleaning up. All we found were strange dolls and indecent games, though. There wasn't anything of value in here..."

"I have arranged for the Public Morals Committee to store them all. I believe they can help prove that the Student Councils of previous years did not take their duties seriously."

Kanou then looked to the entrance. Ookubo also turned around to look at the plain wooden boxes with package artwork piled up in the hallway.

Ookubo glared at them and Kanou took on a similar expression.

"According to the records, this room has been used ever since Principal Sakai's time."

"He was from Mikawa, wasn't he? Why was he using it?"

"Judge. During his conflict with the Pope-Chancellor, he used the old Musashi for transportation and would stay here in the old school building. Although based on what I have heard, he only used it for the short route northward."

"Judge," said Ookubo to show her understanding. She then placed her hands on her hips. "Principal Sakai is a hell of a guy. ...To think he would not just defy

the Pope-Chancellor back then, but win too.”

“The current Student Council and Chancellor’s Officers have done something very similar, you know?”

“They haven’t won yet.” Ookubo sighed. “And it isn’t the Pope-Chancellor they’re defying. It’s the world.”

“Judge. Then, milady, what should we do now? There have been a few uncertain actions, but should we deal with them or ignore them?”

“Well.” Ookubo smiled bitterly with her back to the window. “If we produce results, we won’t need any excuses. ...We can only work hard toward that end.”

So...

“Kanou-kun, do what you can if you see a chance. ...How do the Student Council and Chancellor’s Officers intend to handle the ambassadors they’re sending to those three nations?”

“Judge. Based on what information I have, the three nations just recently sent their acceptance via the Provisional Council. Currently, I assume they are discussing the issue in the Main Blue Thunder they were using as a meeting room last night.”

“Those upperclassmen really like working outside the academy, don’t they?”

Ookubo looked over her shoulder and tilted her head as she viewed the Musashi which had just begun its morning remodeling shift.

“Well, it does help us improve our own work.”

The Main Blue Thunder was completely full.

Masazumi had been there before most of the others and she watched everyone finishing up their meals.

“Futayo and the Tachibana Couple had other business to attend to, didn’t they? ...Well, they weren’t even under consideration for this, so that’s fine.”

“Heh heh heh. Sleepover politician, quit putting on airs and tell us what you want. Why did you gather us all here? Don’t tell me you want to have a group

marriage interview over breakfast!”

The café door opened and Sanyou stepped inside, but she immediately ran back out.

“Ah, Sanyou-sensei! This isn’t a group marriage interview! Where are you going!?”

“Come to think of it, we can’t have other people coming in here. Okay, I’ll go out and put up a ‘Closed’ sign.”

“Wait! Don’t go outside naked! And don’t try to complain that apron you’re wearing changes anything!”

Yoshiyasu raised her hand and stood up.

“I’ll keep watch outside. ...Oh, and the food was good. Western food is nice every so often.”

“What’s this, Yoshy!? Do you want to make my foolish brother your bride!?”

Asama spat out the tea she was still drinking because she had gotten a late start to breakfast due to her water purification.

“Wh-what are you talking about, Kimi!? It may be true Toori-kun can be a bit of a heroine since he has a slender waist and skinny neck, is an excellent cook, can walk on his toes, gets captured, and is a great listener, but...!”

“Tomo, um, I sometimes think that too,” said Mitotsudaira. “But you don’t have to be that blunt.”

“Judge,” added Horizon. “I too had somewhat determined the same thing.”

“Yes,” agreed Adele. “I see the Chancellor like that a little too...”

As everyone else sank down in their seats to agree, Yoshiyasu sighed.

“You’re choosing the ambassadors, right? That has nothing to do with me, so I’ll wait outside.”

“Understood,” said Masazumi while raising a hand toward the girl. “We’ll make sure you can hear the conversation. Just watch on with your sign frame. Oh, you too, Balfette.”

“Oh, judge. I’ve got guard duty too? I think I’ll call some dogs to look after the

back entrance.”

“Please do,” said Masazumi before turning toward Asama.

Masazumi took a breath when she saw Asama nod with Hanami appearing on her shoulder.

“Then let us begin. As the Satomi Student Council President said, we will be beginning a new diplomatic strategy concerning the three local regions. And to start with...”

She raised three fingers on her right hand.

“We will be sending a few of us to Sviet Rus, Mogami, and Date.”

Masazumi saw Naomasa raise her left hand in her work uniform.

“I’d like to prioritize the Musashi’s remodeling, so what are you going to do about that?”

“For diplomacy, the remodeling, and everything else, I will distribute our personnel where they are most needed. ...If there are ever multiple candidates, I’ll decide based on who would be most valuable where.”

“I’d prefer to avoid any differences in values.” Naomasa smiled bitterly but shrugged. “Judge. I’ll do what you say whatever might happen, Masazumi.”

“I appreciate it.”

Masazumi repeated the sentiment in her heart. Naomasa was working on the Musashi’s remodeling and having her on their side went a long way in keeping other workers from objecting.

...But still...

Maybe I’m overthinking this, she thought while looking across the others here from Class Plum.

...They seem to like these political events a fair bit...

She glanced over at one corner of the café.

“O-oh, no! If I’m sent to Sviet Rus, I may begin worshipping the white fairies

there and never return! If that happened, the poor children of Musashi would feel so lonely!”

“Curry made with the spring water of the Mogami River would be Moga-miraculously good.”

“Hmm. I might freeze if I went somewhere too cold...”

“Ha ha ha. Stay in the tube with me and there’s nothing to worry about, Nenji-kun!”

“Ah! Pe-yan! Are you already searching for walkthroughs on beating the Sviet Rus characters in Savage Historical Reign: Super Nininbaori!? Oh, but the most recent location test revealed that Xavier’s Kappahame can be downgraded to Two-Level Homosexuality with a Mid-Level Tea Utensil, so now isn’t DLC Kanou Eitoku considered the best with his Sabi Gauge?”

You people are jumping the gun here. And I have no idea what that last one was all about. Anyway, stay positive, Honda Masazumi. Keep your thoughts positive when unpleasant things happen. But I do feel like I’ve had to keep my thoughts positive an awful lot lately... Well, I just have to think of that in a positive light too...

“M-Masazumi? Why do you look so depressed?”

“Oh, just thinking about some things. But...”

...But it’s good that all of them are so motivated.

The idiot seemed to be thinking about some things recently and he would likely find some kind of answer eventually.

“Okay.” Masazumi raised her hand. “Listen, everyone. This isn’t just about the ambassadors being sent out. I have something to tell all of you concerning how Musashi as a whole will face these three nations. ...In other words, we need to be prepared to take action.”

They all faced her. Silence fell and she felt her mood lifting a little.

This small expectation pleased her, but did that mean she really had been feeling worried lately? Or...

...Oh, I get it.

She realized that it had simply been a while since they had taken action on their own.

But we're not there yet, she thought. We're still in the post-defeat phase. We need to set a new starting point somewhere.

So with that in mind...

"Musashi's basic policy is to not allow anything to be lost. With that as our basis, we will be taking the following policy toward the three nations."

She nodded at the center of the silent group.

"First, our official priorities will be the peace and stability of Oushuu."

Yoshiyasu watched the sign frame while sitting in the chair prepared at the Blue Thunder's entrance.

Vice President: "I want the ambassadors to seek the peace and stability of the Oushuu nations' academies."

That's pretty standard, thought Yoshiyasu from the point of a view of a Student Council President. Oushuu had always minimized any conflict as they competed over their development.

So if Matsudaira was going to rule the Far East in the future, they needed to announce they would bring "peace and stability" to bring back Oushuu's previous lifestyle.

...Of course, that means they need to know what it is the Oushuu powers want.

Yoshiyasu was unsure if she should give a warning there, but then the next words arrived.

Vice President: "Do you understand what I mean by seeking peace and stability?"

Yoshiyasu frowned and tilted her head.

...What you mean by seeking peace and stability? Don't you just mean as a diplomatic policy?

If conflict erupted between the other academies, the ambassadors would protest by saying they “sought peace and stability” and would suggest that Musashi might interfere in their conflict. That would allow them to act as an intermediary between the two nations or to promise support in their recovery. That could bring a hastened end to the conflict, and it could also allow them to focus on the conflict while Musashi handled everything else.

It was a common method during conflicts and the Testament Union had often played the role of the intermediary.

But Musashi’s Vice President spoke.

Vice President: “As Musashi’s Vice President, I command all of you here to seek the peace and stability of Oushuu.”

However...

Vice President: “If it has to do with the history recreation, then you can generally ignore it. And don’t stop any attacks against Musashi. We’ll defend against those here. But make sure you stop any other conflicts or any losses that would be brought by the history recreation.”

“Also,” she continued.

Vice President: “Do not kill. You can resolve things with a conversion of values, such as negotiation or trade, but killing is an act of consumption that can never be balanced out. Oushuu cannot act at the moment because they have had their sense of values changed. You need to return those values to normal. That will return everything to the way it was.”

Masazumi stood up and looked across the others.

“Listen. There have to be quite a few residents of Oushuu that are saying they preferred how things used to be. The best way to move those people to action is actually to suggest the future peace and stability of Matsudaira. As long as the method does not bring a loss, use what you can to return Oushuu to normal and guide them to their proper future.”

She said “listen” once more.

“Work with Date, Mogami, and Sviat Rus and suggest the peace and stability that Matsudaira can build. That means the conflict created by Hashiba will only be a temporary dream and it means we will end Hashiba’s history recreation of the Korean invasion.”

What exactly did that mean?

“In other words, we will bring an end to Hashiba’s history recreations and advance the world to the age of Matsudaira. ...We will hold the future in our hands.”

Yoshiyasu was left speechless by the Musashi Vice President’s announcement.

“...”

She frowned and sighed, but then found herself glancing over at the vassal next to her.

However, the glasses girl in a track suit was looking at her sign frame, doing something with it, and giving food to the dogs that showed up.

“Okay, take care of things over there. If anyone weird shows up, give them a good chomp.”

The vassal watched the three-dog unit run off with raised tails.

“———”

Then she suddenly turned toward Yoshiyasu and tilted her head with a hint of a smile.

“Is something the matter, Satomi President?”

“Well... About your Vice President’s announcement just now...”

“Judge. I think that’s a common way of looking at things for us. We have the personnel needed for it too. Although those personnel are all such awful people. Still...” Her smile grew a little. “I feel like we’re finally making it official after waiting for a good opportunity.”

“But...that’s crazy. Last night, you told Date Narumi you would be sending an ambassador on the assumption that you wouldn’t interfere. And now you’re

telling that ambassador to stop any conflicts?”

“Judge. Don’t worry. We’re all scarily good at making excuses for things.”

At least try to deny it, thought Yoshiyasu, but she also had a feeling this was how things had been since she had arrived.

...Are they really doing this? Actually, they’ve probably already made up their minds. I should be asking how this is going to turn out.

She started thinking about what was to come, but...

“Ah.”

“Is something the matter, Satomi President?”

The vassal asked the same question but with a definite smile this time, so Yoshiyasu nodded first.

“Well,” she began. “I’m an outsider here, but I have kind of unfairly decided that I would observe how you handle things here in Musashi.”

“Judge. That’s right. This complicated stuff doesn’t have anything to do with you or me. Normally, anyways. ...Then again, Musashi isn’t exactly normal.”

Vice President: “Okay, I’ll start with who’s going to Mogami. That’ll be the Satomi Student Council President and Balfette. Good luck.”

“Waiiiiiit!!”

Yoshiyasu started running at full speed from the very first step.

Everyone saw Yoshiyasu throw open the Main Blue Thunder’s door.

“What are you thinking!?”

The nudist was striking a pose in front of the door, so he was sandwiched between it and the wall, but Yoshiyasu did not even notice.

“Why me!?”

Masazumi and the others exchanged a glance.

After a while, Horizon raised her right hand and spoke after the others gave her a nod of understanding.

“That is a refreshingly new reaction.”

Masazumi nodded in agreement and then realized something.

...Huh? Does this mean I'm being corrupted by Musashi?

“Um, Asama? If possible could you use a ‘bullying meter’ or something to check on me?”

She turned around to see Asama with her back turned. The shrine maiden was whispering with Hanami about a sign frame displaying some kind of meter. But when the Mouse noticed her, she frantically karate chopped the sign frame to pieces.

“I-it’s nothing. Clap!”

“Y-yes. It’s nothing, Masazumi! It’s relatively fine!”

What is and relative to what? she wondered, but she decided to trust the expert’s opinion. It did worry her that the expert was also a carrier of the infection, though.

“What’s wrong, Satomi President? Is something the matter?”

Satomi’s Student Council President raised her voice and eyebrows.

“Why am I being made an ambassador to Mogami!? I’m from Satomi Academy!”

“One of the reasons is to demonstrate that Satomi has joined Matsudaira.”

Satomi’s President’s mouth hung open at the immediate answer, so Masazumi decided to casually continue as if throwing it out there.

“Another reason is so Satomi Academy can show that it wants to work toward the peace and stability of Oushuu.”

“W-wait. ...Are you deciding our policy for us!?”

“Eh? ...Is Satomi not going to do anything about Oushuu?”

Satomi’s President groaned and wrinkled her brow.

“Well, I didn’t say that... But our territory was-...”

Someone interrupted. It was Naomasa who stood by the wall. She spoke after nodding toward the girl.

“It’s not that we don’t understand Satomi’s situation. ...Masazumi, you don’t actually need Satomi to do this, right?”

“Judge. If you can’t do it, then you can’t do it. Some things just can’t be helped.”

“That’s for sure...”

“Yes,” agreed Naruze who sat at an added table with Naito. She was pouring cream into her coffee cup to draw a picture. “After what happened to Satomi’s land, it wouldn’t surprise anyone if their representative became a stereotypical depressed character. ...You are a year younger, so you can just watch us. The Satomi clan helped us a lot and we’ll pay you back for that, so head back with what you’ve learned once this is all over.”

After hearing all that, Satomi’s President raised her eyebrows, breathed in, and stared at Masazumi.

“Are you making fun of me!?”

She bought it, Masazumi told the others with some secret eye contact.

The next to speak was the Aoi Sister.

In the seat next to Asama, she pinched at the tart from the night before and looked to Satomi’s President.

“But Flat Girl, weren’t you saying Satomi wouldn’t do anything? No, *can’t* do anything? After all, you lack so very much: territory, people, money, and breasts.”

But...

“But listen, Flat Girl. None of those are a reason for you yourself not to do anything.”

“—————”

Satomi's President was left speechless, but then she gasped.

"No, wait! What do breasts have to do with this!?"

"You silly girl." The Aoi Sister lifted Asama's up from below. "Based on my personal investigation, girls with large breasts have larger and calmer hearts! See? You can jiggle Asama's all you want and she won't get mad at you!"

"Kh...! Kimi? I'm going to give you a calm and big-hearted scolding later. I'm going to scold you like crazy."

"You don't have to go along with that," muttered the others, but Masazumi ignored them and faced Satomi's President.

"So do you understand now?"

"How the hell could I!?"

...Eh? But I sort of understood that. Does that mean there's something wrong with me?

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Hanami hurriedly hiding a sign frame, but she decided not to worry about it. Instead, she sighed, let her shoulders droop, and spoke to the other girl.

"Satomi President, are you listening?"

"...I understand."

...Eh? Does she understand or not?

Mal-Ga: "The concentrated insanity in this room must have gotten to her."

Gold Mar: "Wow, Ga-chan, you're really good at drawing my face with milk."

Obscene: "The buffer between her thoughts as a leader and her thoughts as an individual is preventing her from being honest with herself, isn't it!?"

That was more or less it, so...

"Do you understand?"

"Testament. No, I guess I should be saying 'judge' now."

Satomi's President looked up at her with her shoulders lowered.

"I have no nation, no people, and no money. ...All I have are myself and the

Satomi history recreation that I'm continuing."

In other words...

"There is one thing I can do despite having nothing. ...I can make diplomatic use of Satomi's history recreation. Isn't that right, Musashi Vice President?"

"Yes. With no national strength, the history recreation will become the foundation of the Satomi clan's negotiations. ...But there is a way to make up for a little of what you've lost."

"By acting as a representative of Musashi, right?" She sighed. "By becoming a member of Musashi. ...That will give me personal funds and the backing of Musashi as a 'nation'."

She relaxed her shoulders again, looked to Masazumi, and then bowed.

"Very well. ...I will go to the Mogami clan. Please make the necessary arrangements."

Good, thought Masazumi now that she had a decision from Satomi.

She then looked toward the entranceway.

"Balfette, you go with her to Mogami, but the Satomi President will be the main player."

Balfette tilted her head while peeking in from outside.

"Should I think of this the same as at England?"

"We're forcing you in where you weren't asked for, so the situation is a little different. Think of our diplomatic strategy this time as a business strategy. We are seeking the stability of Oushuu, Jouetsu, and Kantou via Matsudaira and we have invited the Satomi President as an advisor. I would be the general manager."

"I see." Mitotsudaira nodded. "We're using Yoshiyasu as an advisor because she knows a lot about Kantou and Oushuu, and then we're giving her the authority she needs as a diplomat."

"That's right. And just for now, Balfette, I am making you an aide to the 5th

Special Duty Officer. Mitotsudaira will not be going to Mogami, but you will be acting as a knight's aide and as the Satomi President's aide."

"Judge."

Balfette nodded and looked to Satomi's President. The Satomi girl's brow was still a little wrinkled, so the vassal smiled at her.

"Well, we have a strategy laid out for us, so we'll manage."

"I hope so..."

"Don't worry. We'll do whatever it takes to make sure of it," said Masazumi while raising a hand toward Asama.

Asama smiled and nodded, and a sign frame appeared next to everyone's faces. A picture of Hanami danced inside it, but...

"I sent a program to all of your sign frames. Oh, and it's a generic one so it will work on Catholic ones or others not from our shrine."

"Tomo? What is this?"

"It sends our divine transmissions primarily through the IZUMO pathways instead of just the Musashi ones. They'll be sent through Kantou IZUMO and IZUMO HQ for transmission over the divine network set up between all of the Far East's shrines. Unless you're being blocked by a jamming spell, you can send your divine transmissions from anywhere in the Far East."

Everyone sounded impressed, but Mitotsudaira asked a question with a smile frozen on her face.

"Tomo? Don't tell me..."

A sign frame appeared next to Mitotsudaira's face, displaying the Reine des Garous smiling and waving. Mitotsudaira quickly stabbed her hand through the sign frame to break it and she forced a smile with raised eyebrows.

"Tomo... This was set up with Hexagone Française's backing, wasn't it!?"

"Yes. IZUMO is neutral, but it's still best to have a sponsor for this sort of thing. Mouri is currently opposing P.A. Oda. And in addition to Hexagone Française, this also uses some allotment of the divine networks of the M.H.R.R

Protestants and some Mlasi sects,” explained Asama. “But, well, your mom immediately signed the contract once I said I would periodically send her pictures of you. ...Cooperative friends really are indispensable.”

Still Got It: “That’s for sure.”

“Cooperative!? I think she’s using us!”

“Calm down, Mitotsudaira-sama.” Horizon placed a hand on Mitotsudaira’s shoulder. “Listen, Mitotsudaira-sama. If you think of it as your embarrassing pictures saving Musashi, then wouldn’t it be a very-...”

Horizon placed a hand on her forehead and thought for a moment.

“...Let’s change the subject. A cheerful topic would be best.”

“A very!? A very what!?”

“Wait a moment,” said Masazumi, but Mitotsudaira only tilted her head.

“Anyway, are you sure you want to only send Yoshiyasu and Adele? Even if we can give them the authority to negotiate, we’re sending them to what could become a warzone.”

“I will have the Satomi President bring Righteousness with her.”

“Wait,” said the Satomi President herself. “Righteousness is a weapon. I can’t bring that to another academy so easily.”

Masazumi thought about that. *This is going to be a little tricky*, she decided.

“Satomi President, your primary god of war is Yatsufusa. You inherited it from the previous Chancellor after all.”

“—————”

The dumbfounded Satomi’s President’s face paled, but Masazumi kept her eyes on the girl.

“Listen,” she began. “Currently, Yatsufusa is not under your control. ...I am well aware that it and Murasamemaru on your waist there have not accepted you as their master. But even so, you are Satomi’s Student Council President and...”

And...

“Satomi’s Chancellor.”

Yoshiyasu listened.

“You hold the full authority of Satomi. Both the nation and the academy. That means you must always carry with you whatever you can. If you can’t use Yatsufusa, that means Righteousness. If you’re worried about it being a weapon, then use ceremonial equipment. That is all.”

“Why?”

“Because you must return alive.”

“That’s why I’m asking.”

“Because you hold the full authority of Satomi.”

“No, not that. That isn’t what I mean.”

Yoshiyasu noticed a grim feeling inside her as she asked her question.

“Why are you so intent on treating me as the full authority of Satomi?”

“Because we made a promise with the previous Chancellor of Satomi,” quietly answered Musashi’s Vice President. “To repay him for the great price he paid for Matsudaira’s future, we promised to take care of you and Satomi. The history recreation ensures that Matsudaira is the future ruler of the Far East, so we can’t break a promise we made with someone else.”

“This is...thanks to Yoshiyori?”

“Looking at it now, you could say that, yes. But we are not the kindest of guardians.”

Musashi’s Vice President turned a sign frame of Oushuu toward Yoshiyasu. She tapped at Mogami and smiled toward the other girl.

“Show us some results here to determine exactly how we will treat you from here on out, Satomi President. Show us whether you can bear the full authority of Satomi on your own.”

“You really suck at motivating people.”

Yoshiyasu suddenly recalled the past. She began to wonder what her sister and *he* would have done at a time like this.

...I lived an easy life back then.

“All you have to do is give me some snacks and flatter me a little. Then I’ll do it without being told. ...But Righteousness doesn’t have any ceremonial equipment right now. I will need some equipment from IZUMO.”

“Judge.”

After seeing Musashi’s Vice President nod, Yoshiyasu placed a hand on the door.

“I’ll listen to the rest outside. ...I’m eager to find out who will be sent to Date and Sviet Rus.”

Chapter 24: Out of Place Advisor

第二十四章

『場違いの相談者』

行き場の無い者
留まる場があるなら
行き場をどうする
配点（誰も彼も）



If someone has nowhere to go

But they have somewhere to stay

Where will they go?

Point Allocation (Everyone)

Masazumi watched the door slowly close after the Satomi Student Council President and Balfette left. She then made sure the divine transmission line with those outside was in place.

“Next up are the personnel going to Sviet Rus, but this one honestly carries a somewhat difficult problem. After all, they’re currently in conflict with P.A. Oda.”

She touched the sign frame map to slide it over to the Jouetsu region.

“Also, Sviet Rus’s Uesugi clan becomes a pro-Hashiba force after Nobunaga’s death and takes Hashiba’s side during the decisive Battle of Sekigahara. They remain enemies of Matsudaira for a very long time.”

“In that case,” said Nenji with a sigh. “We cannot send anyone important there.”

“Don’t be so quick to decide that.” Masazumi stood up, took a few steps, and stopped in front of someone. “Mary. Crossunite isn’t here now, but I want you and him to go to Sviet Rus.”

“Judge. I will be fine as long as I am with Master Tenzou.”

Masazumi was relieved by her immediate response and smile, so she turned around.

“Also...Horizon and Aoi.”

Asama looked up.

...Eh?

She spoke a reflexive question to Masazumi as the girl looked their way.

“U-um, didn’t you just say we wouldn’t gain much from negotiating with Sviet

Rus? And it's a warzone now, so why would you send Toori-kun, Horizon, and even Mary there?"

"I do know why you would think that," said Masazumi.

Kimi nodded from the next seat over and placed her hand on Asama's shoulder.

"Aren't you forgetting someone?"

"No. I just feel like Tenzou-kun would be back in three days no matter where we sent him."

"True." Kimi nodded again, rested her head on her hand, and looked in the same direction as Asama was. "Why do you want to send my foolish brother to Sviet Rus? The only souvenirs he could bring back are vodka and sake, and that would only make Asama happy."

"It would not make me happy. ...Ah! What are those looks for, everyone!? Toori-kun, you say something too!"

She turned toward the door he had been pinned behind before.

...Huh?

"No one's there?"

The area was abandoned.

...Yes.

She decided to assume his absence was intentional.

...Yes. Everything's fine.

She could relax when she remembered that he had to be somewhere and that this was most likely the setup for some kind of joke.

Then someone moved in front of her: Horizon. The automaton grabbed a spare chair from by the wall, placed it near the center of the floor, and beckoned Persona-kun over.

...This is going to be something weird again, isn't it?

Persona-kun nodded silently and sat in the chair.

“———”

Soon, a forceful blow struck the bottom of the floor panel below Persona-kun's chair. The idiot's voice followed.

“Huh? It won't open! That's odd. Huh? Ahhhn? Ahiiin?”

“Judge. Please be quiet. I will nail it shut.”

“Don't renovate my house! And aren't you going to praise me for my setup?”

Horizon casually began hammering in some nails.

“Ah, dammit! She's hammering them in as accurately as an expert carpenter! C-curse you! I'll do it right next time! I swear it! I swear it!!”

Masazumi glared toward the idiot's voice as he seemed to run away somewhere underground.

“Anyway, we know he's here, so I guess I'll explain why we need to focus on Sviet Rus.”

She took a breath and looked to someone by the wall.

“Augesvarer, take it away.”

“Judge, judge,” said Heidi as she opened a sign frame on Masazumi's instructions.

Unsurprisingly, it displayed a map of the Far East. It was zoomed in on the area from Sviet Rus to southern Kantou.

“Erimaki, show it up above.”

On top of her head, Erimaki raised its front legs and displayed the map on the ceiling.

“Now, then.” She put her hands on her hips and smiled. “It's really simple when you get down to it. Even without advancing the history recreation, P.A. Oda currently controls the center of the Far East, right? Before, their eastern provisional border was shared with Qing-Takeda, but the Takeda side of Qing-Takeda has been destroyed.”

The red representing P.A. Oda moved in from the west to reach the western side of Kantou, but something was there to resist their invasion.

“Sviet Rus is to the northeast, Houjou is to the southeast, and both the Qing forces of Qing-Takeda and Musashi’s Matsudaira are to the east. ...Now, do you know what’s going to happen with this in the future?”

“Judge,” said Mitotsudaira. She looked up to the ceiling and placed a hand on her bare throat. “Qing-Takeda will be pushed further east and Houjou will be destroyed by Hashiba.”

“That’s right.”

Heidi lightly tapped Erimaki and the red advanced from western Kantou to the southern region bordering the ocean.

“Do you understand?” asked Heidi. “Eventually, Musashi’s only path to and from the western Far East will be through Sviet Rus. Sviet Rus’s Uesugi will eventually side with Hashiba, but since the Uesugi clan isn’t actually destroyed, they won’t become P.A. Oda. And on the Russian side of things, they’ll be anti-Mlasi.”

“That isn’t all,” said Shirojiro as he crossed his arms next to her. “Ever since the Mikawa incident, Musashi has been managing the deposits of the Far East reservations and the national wealth stored in that fashion. In other words, Musashi is running a giant bank. But...”

As soon as he said that, Heidi displayed another map of the Far East. The western end had a few red circles added.

“But ever since the Battle of Mikatagahara, most of the western forces have instructed us to freeze the money they have left with Musashi.”

“Freeze...the money?” asked Suzu.

Shirojiro nodded.

“It means they will not withdraw any, but Musashi is not to use it in any way.”

Immediately, someone else asked a question: Horizon. She tilted her expressionless head.

“What are those western academies trying to do? Why would they not

withdraw their money but not let us use it?”

“It comes down to the threat of P.A. Oda, Horizon,” said Masazumi. “Even if they wanted to withdraw and use their money, they’ve just seen P.A. Oda take over K.P.A. Italia. Moving money around could make them the next target of an invasion. And even if they are invaded, they can recover if they still have that money waiting for them. So now that Musashi has lost to Hashiba, they want to leave that money with us, but they don’t want us using it. And since they think the odds are good Musashi will lose again, they can’t have us using the money they’ve left with us. Plus, freezing Musashi’s money will benefit our enemy, P.A. Oda. This is a decent performance to remain on P.A. Oda’s good side. But...”

But...

“A giant city ship like the Musashi would be useful to the western forces. However, we’re currently in the east and have no means of safely reaching the west. Since we lost to Hashiba, the western forces have to act on the assumption that we won’t be returning to the west in the near future.”

“I see. So if we were to start getting along with Sviet Rus...”

Still standing, Horizon placed a hand on her chin and suddenly raised her right foot to knee height.

“...the western nations will unfreeze their money with us and we will have proven we can overcome most of our financial troubles. That is why you want to send people as important as us. ...Hnn!!”

She stomped her right foot, sending a light tremor through the floor.

Immediately, the sign frame by the ceiling broke and the nudist fell and crashed into the table with his limbs sprawled out.

Voices of surprise filled the café, but they quickly quieted down.

Yoshiyasu heard them from outside.

“ ... ”

She looked to the vassal next to her, but the girl only gave the café a quick glance before turning back to the dogs.

“Okay, go patrol the area.”

She was unfazed.

...Is that how things work here?

When in Rome do as the Romans do, so I guess I should go along with this. But this is still odd.

While she wondered what was going on, Yoshiyasu checked her sign frame.

Vice President: “On the economic front and to have passage through the Far East, I do not want a hostile relationship with Sviet Rus. After all, they also possess a Logismoi Óplo. Also, if we pass west through Sviet Rus and cross Poland, we will be near M.H.R.R. and Holland.”

Silver Wolf: “If we reach Holland, we will have effectively made a full circuit of the Far East.”

The Mito Lord’s words gave Yoshiyasu a thought.

...I joined them at IZUMO, so I’ll have made a half-circuit.

Was it jealousy making her think that she had seen less of the world than them?

Vice President: “Well, I guess it will mean that. But if possible, I want to secure passage through the North Sea as well as a path to meet with Sweden’s Chancellor Christina and Holland’s Resistance Chancellor and Prince of Orange, as both will be victorious nations at Westphalia. So Mitotsudaira, you go to Sviet Rus too.”

Silver Wolf: “What!? ...But this is my land here.”

Vice President: “You’ll be their bodyguard. Not only do you have the actual strength, but you and Mary will ‘guard’ the others with your official positions. I’m sorry, but please try to look at it like that.”

“What does that mean?” asked the vassal.

It took Yoshiyasu a moment to realize the question was directed at her.

“O-oh... The Mito Lord is the daughter of a Hexagone Française VIP and Mary Stuart is the mother of England’s next king. Those nations aren’t in conflict with

the Far East, but if something were to happen to those two, it could make an enemy of Hexagone Française and England. And in reverse, leaving a favorable impression on those two could improve those two powerful nations' impression of you. Their positions make them the best bodyguards available.”

They were using all available personnel in every way possible. They must have really wanted to obtain stability with Sviet Rus.

Silver Wolf: “Th-then I have no choice. I will join the others as my king's bodyguard.”

Scarred: “I too will join you, secure in the knowledge that I have a role here.”

Those older state guests had decided to act for the sake of Musashi's future. So...

“I need to rethink some things too.”

Yoshiyasu was nervous, but she had a role to play and she had little else to do. If she also had no complaints with that role...

...I just have to go.

As soon as she thought that, some text scrolled along the sign frame next to her face.

Me: “Fine then. It's early summer, but I'll have to prepare some winter clothes. But...hey, where'd Tenzou go? Doesn't he have to hear all this?”

Mary was unsure what to do when everyone started focusing on her.

The focus made her a little nervous, but not enough to grow flustered. It was something else that moved her heart.

...Master Tenzou.

She brought a hand to her mouth and thought for a moment, but then Naruze asked a question with a tilt of the head.

“Tenzou went to that scene of that attack last night, right? Is he doing his own investigation?”

“Eh? Yes, judge. That's what he said.”

“Really?”

Naruze tilted her head further and exchanged a look with Naito.

“Most of the investigation was completed last night, so I don’t see much point in him going there,” said Naito.

“Well...”

When she trailed off, Mitotsudaira opened her mouth to help.

“I don’t blame him. He’s the 1st Special Duty Officer, but he was late to obtain that information last night. ...He probably has some thoughts about that.”

And...

“Are you worried about that, Mary?”

There seemed to be some expectation in her voice, but she was exactly right. Tenzou had been silent that morning, except when he suddenly seemed to notice he was being so quiet. Then he had said: “O-oh. I was just thinking is all.”

Overall, he had seemed different from usual.

He had acted normal after that, but...

...I wish he would confide in me more.

She sighed, but for some reason, those around her began fanning each other.

“Kimi! Kimi! Tenzou-kun has finally started to enter the zone!”

“Heh heh heh. That’s right, Asama! It’s summer, but the temperature is rising even further! There’s going to be lots of stripping!!”

Mary had no idea what they meant, but she thought they shared in her worries. Since he was not here, she decided to ask for some advice concerning him. She wanted to know what to do during times like this morning.

“Um, can I ask something about Master Tenzou? It’s about this morning.”

“Please do! Please do!”

Mary was surprised when a group of mostly girls leaned forward.

...They’re all worried about Master Tenzou, aren’t they!?

She could not help but feel happy about that. He was thinking about a lot and worrying, so she was relieved to have the help of these veterans who had known him for a lot longer than her.

“Um, when I woke up this morning, Master Tenzou...”

She was not used to the Far Eastern language.

...Wasn't like his normal self.

She did not think that would get across what she wanted to say. No one else was around to see his “normal self” in the mornings, so she decided to search for simple way to explain the problem.

She thought about what to say.

He had been sitting on his bed hanging his head.

He had crossed his arms to signify he was thinking, but he had been groaning so much that she thought he might be sick. When she had called out to him, he had jumped in surprise and immediately turned toward her. That much was normal, but today...

...Would you describe him as disappointed?

She had a feeling that was not quite right.

Disappointment was generally in response to something other than oneself. When it was towards oneself...

...Regretful isn't quite right and self-loathing is too strong.

“Oh.”

She found just the right nuance. It referred to the heavy downwards direction of his mood. Was it “feeling down”? No, she had a feeling she needed more words for emphasis.

“Yes. Ever since he woke up this morning, um...”

She placed a hand on her cheek. She had trouble with the Far Eastern language, but using their language would help them understand each other.

“Mater Tenzou has been feeling himself down below.”

“He went there!?”

Asama: “What should we do?”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. Don’t you mean what do we *want* to do? But your bow would probably be overkill here. Doesn’t the shrine have a way of torturing him?”

Vice President: “W-wait! There’s clearly something wrong here! I say we double check on this!”

Mal-Ga: “Then good luck. Go ask Mary just what Tenzou was ‘feeling’.”

Masazumi took a step forward from the silent group and spoke to Mary.

“U-u-um, Mary? U-uh, about Crossunite...”

“Y-yes. Judge. What is it?”

“Um, w-was he really ‘feeling’ his p-pe...pe...no, I mean...” Masazumi blushed.
“Down below!?”

Everyone sighed, so she turned toward them with a flourish.

“Y-you got a problem with that!? All that matters is that she understands what I mean!”

“You’re no fun, Seijun-kun.”

“Now, now,” said Mary as she nodded toward Masazumi. “Judge. Thank you for worrying, but it’s true.”

Yes.

“Since early this morning, Master Tenzou was feeling himself down below.”

Worshipper: “He’s quite the pervert.”

Uqui: “When did Tenzou grow so distant from us?”

Flat Vassal: “I have an honest question. What do guys normally do in the

morning?”

Boys: “Um...”

Mitotsudaira saw Masazumi’s shoulders droop as the girl stepped back.

She looked exhausted and Mitotsudaira considered giving her a word of support, but...

“You handle this.”

Masazumi tapped her shoulder.

“Eh? ...Wh-why me!?”

She protested, but Masazumi averted her gaze and ignored her.

If it was her turn to add to the joke, there was nothing else she could do. She finally worked up her nerve, stood up, and stepped forward. She stood in front of Mary and forced a smile.

“Um...uh...”

She thought about what to ask. She of course had no intention of asking how healthy or hard the 1st Special Duty Officer was in the mornings. If she was going to ask about this, she had to do so more objectively.

“Mary, when you woke up, what was the 1st Special Duty Officer doing?”

“Judge. Master Tenzou was sitting cross-legged like this, facing the wall, hanging his head, and...quietly feeling himself down below. Yes.”

Silver Wolf: “What was that guy doing with the wall this morning?”

Asama: “Mito! Mito! You mustn’t get emotional! Calm down!”

Mitotsudaira took a deep breath and swore to herself she would not forget to smile.

“Did you...see anything else strange?”

“Judge. I’m not sure I would call it strange...but if you ask me, he was feeling himself down below extremely hard.”

“Eh? ...Extremely hard? Down below?”

“Yes. He has felt himself down below on occasion before, you see.”

“B-before? Um, since when?”

“W-well...”

Mary seemed a little concerned by how Mitotsudaira latched onto that comment. *Oh, no*, she thought, but then she saw Mary sighing.

“Sometimes when he’s busy at work, he doesn’t arrive in time to pick up our rations or he misses a chance to go on a walk with me. He tends to somewhat feel himself down below when that happens.”

Smoking Girl: “What has that guy been doing at the ration station?”

Wise Sister: “Heh heh heh. Somewhat feeling himself? ...That ninja tries to be a sneaky ninja even there, doesn’t he?”

Me: “Y’know, this is pretty bad. Tenzou’s entering brand new territory here.”

Mitotsudaira did not want to agree, but she had to. Hoping this ordeal would end soon, she asked another question.

“And what did you do, Mary?”

“Well, I called out to him and he jumped in surprise.”

Me: “Yeah, that’ll happen if you’re caught off guard. I’m used to it, though.”

Gold Mar: “That’s something we’re really not too familiar with...”

I suppose not, thought Mitotsudaira as new text arrived on her sign frame.

Still Got It: “But I think it’s best when a guy’s got that much energy. I don’t know if it’s thanks to my divine protection, but my husband is always ‘extremely hard’ in the mornings before he even wakes up, so we’re doing it ‘extremely hard’.”

Silver Wolf: “Why was that in the present continuous tense!?”

Mitotsudaira looked over to Asama who was in charge of the divine transmission settings, but she and Hanami refused to look her in the eye.

Mary then continued.

“Master Tenzou was the same during breakfast, so it was hard to bear.”

“Mary-sama, I believe that is the normal reaction,” said Horizon. “It would be difficult to enjoy your food like that.”

“Judge. That’s right. When someone important to you is feeling himself down below, it’s normal to be worried.”

“Yes, yes! Very normal!”

Mary seemed relieved that everyone agreed.

Don’t worry, Mary. We have someone who can be a nudist, crossdress, and cook dumplings all at once, so we can give a proper retort...I mean, reaction to more normal strangeness.

But then Mary’s shoulders stiffened.

“But he won’t tell me why he’s feeling himself down below.”

“Well, explaining it can really ruin the mood,” said the idiot. “Hey, don’t look at me like there’s something wrong with me!”

“Um...” Mitotsudaira chose her words carefully to best describe what to do in that situation. “At times like that, I think it’s best to just be by his side. It can double as keeping an eye on his behavior. Anyway, um, what did he do then?”

“Judge. He went to inspect the site of last night’s attack while still feeling himself down below.”

Mal-Ga: “Is he an exhibitionist!? And what’s he planning to do there?”

Gold Mar: “I kind of think it would be best not to think about it too much.”

That was when the café door opened.

“Sorry I’m late. 1st Special Duty Officer, reporting for duty!”

Tenzou was a little disturbed when everyone gave him a look he had never seen before.

...Eh!? What brought this on!? Is that a mix of contempt and anticipation?

“You’re the worst,” said Naruze. “But I’ll still put you in my doujinshi.”

“Wh-what is this about!?”

“Crossunite.”

For some reason, Masazumi was blushing as she held her right hand out toward him. Behind her, the idiot raised his right forearm a little and shook it up and down, but he ignored it.

“What is it, Masazumi-dono?”

“W-well, it can get in the way of your duties and there are a number of public morals issues, so try to stick to the more standard methods when controlling yourself. Also...don’t do it in public.”

Is she talking about stress? Well, dealing with these awful people on a daily basis is exhausting.

Asama raised her hand.

“Masazumi, as our Public Morals Committee Member, I say you should rethink sending Tenzou-kun to Sviet Rus. ...It would be a lot of trouble if he started doing it during a negotiation.”

“Personally, I think he’d lose it to frostbite in no time if he tried that in Russia,” said Naito.

What are they talking about? he wondered and looked over to see Mary smiling at him with the ends of her eyebrows lowered.

Oh, he realized. This morning.

So he faced Masazumi.

“Not to worry. I had a lot on my mind, but after looking around the scene of the attack and thinking about some things, I’m feeling quite refreshed.”

“...Refreshed?”

“Huh? Why do you look so disturbed? I’m just saying inspecting the scene and moving my body around left me feeling refreshed.”

“We understand, so you don’t have to say it again.”

He had Noriki’s assurance, so Tenzou looked straight at Mary.

“Sorry for worrying you. ...From now on, I will try to confide in you and...well, sometimes I might not say anything, but...”

He was afraid of how the others would react, but he said what he thought he needed to say.

“Can I rely on you at times like this, Mary-dono?”

Mary was briefly confused.

...Um...

The others were saying something with their sign frames and Naruze was starting to draw something with unbelievable excitement, but...

“Um, you mean...”

His request to rely on her had confused her...or rather, she did not know how to react. After all...

...This is the first time he has asked something like that of me.

No, it was possible he had when he had confessed, but that had been more about a powerful desire for her.

...But this morning was about himself.

She had a feeling he would try to put on a brave face, but he would let her accept him.

“———”

She would be able to support him, the boy who had accepted all of her. He would let her. And he had called that “relying” on her.

...Yes.

Mary obeyed the feeling inside her. She had decided in England to live her life the way she wished and she had gone to the person who would let her do that, so...

“Judge.” Mary smiled. “When you’re feeling like that, feel free to rely on me as much as you want. It would make me just as happy.”

“G-good. J-Judge.”

He nodded with his hat pulled deep over his eyes, so she gestured to the seat

opposite her.

She was not sure she should already be thinking about what to do from now on. And she was worried it was conceited of her to think relying on her would allow him to continue saying he was “fine”.

But one thing did bother her.

“Um, Lady Masazumi? Master Tenzou will be fine, so can we get back to talking about Sviet Rus?”

“Judge.” Masazumi nodded. “I’ll send the details with the log, but the ambassadors to Sviet Rus will be Crossunite, Mary, Horizon, Aoi, and Mitotsudaira. ...We’re counting on all of you.”

Crossunite answered after a moment.

“Judge.”

Masazumi heard him agree without hesitation and heard Mary breathe a sigh of relief.

...I guess the two of them will have to come up with a fundamental solution about him “feeling himself down below”.

With that settled, she moved on.

“Next is who we’ll be sending to the Date clan.”

She looked to both of the people she was about to name.

“Mukai, Urquiaga. That will be you two.”

Suzu tensed up.

...Eh?

She was surprised and caught off guard. She wondered why she would be chosen, but she also felt like this was the right decision. There was one main reason for that.

“Because of...England?”

“That’s right. You already have experience as a diplomat. You’re also the Musashi’s acting captain, so you’re more than qualified to be an ambassador.”

“Heh heh. Wait right there, flat-chested politician. Don’t you have something to tell her? You can draw people in by leaving things unsaid, but you mustn’t do that to those close to you.”

“Yes, I know. That’s why I said ‘more than’. Are you listening?”

Suzu nodded, so Masazumi continued.

“We’re giving them the Musashi’s acting captain, so from Date’s perspective... you’ll mostly be a hostage.”

“Really...?”

She often heard the word “hostage” in a suspenseful drama on the divine radio or television. Robbers would hole up in the bank, point their matchlock guns at the workers, and demand a means of escape. That was generally when the magistrate would show up for the following scene: “Ha ha ha. Silly robbers, you should learn how to use those matchlocks before trying something like this. The safety’s still on.”

“Eh!? ...Ah, you tricked us, you son of a bitch! Get him!”

Her parents would always seem satisfied and say things like “That magistrate tricks someone every time” or “That’s a pretty personal interpretation”. But in that case...

“Will you s-save...the hostage?”

“Eh? Oh, well, you aren’t guaranteed to be a hostage. But it could happen. Basically, we’re leaving an important person with Date as a safety to ensure we don’t become enemies. We’re saying we won’t attack them because we don’t want to lose you, Mukai.”

...Eh?

“B-but...I’m not th-that important...”

Musashino: “Allow me to interrupt. In reference to our duties on the bridge, I

would make the following ranking: Suzu-sama = Asama-sama > Adele-sama > Everyone Else > Neshinbara-sama > Chancellor. Over.”

Me: “Are those ‘>’ things arrows!? So the further you go, the better you are!?”

Musashino: “It is the exact opposite. Over.”

Me: “Did you have to answer that quickly!?”

Hori-ko: “Those at the bottom should take a lesson from Asama-sama and rethink their life.”

Asama: “But why me? I’ve barely ever been on the bridge.”

Musashino: “You are always a huge help with the divine transmissions. Without you, we would lose most of the Musashi’s divine transmission support, which would place a larger burden on us. When Suzu-sama is on the bridge, we can fulfill our maid roles as automatons and her sensory support reduces the burden on us. Adele-sama helps guide the ship. As for the others...

“●Neshinbara-sama: His pessimistic assumptions and forceful course instructions are quite dangerous.

“●Chancellor: In the way, lifts our skirts, nudist, sleeps, plays porn games on the bridge monitors, etc.

“Over.”

Asama: “Maybe that last person really should rethink his life.”

I see, thought Asama as she realized how important everyone was. So...

“Um, Suzu-san? If you think going to the Date clan would be too difficult, I can go in your place.”

“Eh?”

Suzu looked her way and began clasping her hands in front of her chest. She may have been hesitating because the speed and complexity of her finger movements grew.

But...

“N-no. I-I’ll go. B-because...”

She continued moving her hands as she turned toward Masazumi.

“Are the Date people...b-bad people?”

It was Urquiaga, not Masazumi, that answered. He stood his tail up and seemed to be sitting on it.

“If you define ‘bad’ as a lack of elder sisters, then they are indeed bad people.”

“Urquiaga, just so you know, Date Chancellor Masamune is female and has a younger brother.”

“Then they are good people, Ambassador Mukai.”

...It looks like he’s willing to go now, but is that a good thing?

Asama was mentally sweating, but Suzu had stopped moving her hands and she faced Masazumi once more.

“Then...n-nothing will happen...if I go, right?”

“Nothing should. After all, the Date clan becomes Matsudaira’s approved ruler of Oushuu. Causing trouble between the two academies now would be the same as throwing away their future.”

“A-are the...D-date people...good people?”

“Yes. If you remain true to yourself, I think they will all be good people.”

Asama said that with a smile and Suzu smiled back while squeezing her clasped hands.

“Okay... Th-then I’ll try my best...to do that.”

...Oh?

Everyone sensed something in Suzu’s words there.

Suzu was speaking in the active voice.

It was possible she intended to continue like that as long as this continued. She was so intent on remaining true to herself, that she was straying from her usual self.

...Not good, not good.

Kimi then tapped on Asama's shoulder and Asama knew what that meant.

"Um, Suzu-san?"

Suzu looked up at her again as if asking what she wanted, so Asama and Kimi replied in unison while giving the girl a thumbs up.

"Yay! Let's do our best."

Suzu unclasped her hands and raised her own right thumb.

"Y-y-yay..."

She blushed and her voice faded away, but Masazumi spoke up to help.

"Um," she began. "I will handle the negotiations over divine transmission. I will have Asama prepare a direct connection with Date, so I'll make sure Mukai and Urquiaga can converse with everyone else in both audio and video. It will be through the sign frame, but your situation will be little different from sitting with us in the classroom."

"I'll do my best," said Asama with her job in mind.

She then turned toward Kimi who was tapping her shoulder again. The other girl held her hand to the side of her mouth and spoke quietly.

"Hey, Asama."

"What?"

"Aren't you glad you have something to do? You don't like being neglected, do you?"

"Um...do you have a point?"

She tried to speak forcefully to act as a warning, but Kimi narrowed her eyes and whispered from behind her raised hand.

"Crybaby."

"Y-you're calling me that again!?"

When had she seen? When had she noticed? Asama did not know, but of the others around her, only Toori gave her a thumbs up.

She blushed and opened a sign frame with a displeased look.

“Okay, I’ll be sending out the necessary settings, so everyone bring out your sign frames or handheld shrines!”

The spear resembled a long sword.

Muneshige held it atop the gravel. He tried swinging it once or twice in Sakai’s yard.

...The weight balance is more like a nagamaki than a spear.

That was because the blade and shaft were of about equal length. The strength of his arms on the shaft would be directly placed on the blade. He briefly considered whether he should hold the top and bottom as with a spear or just the bottom as with a long sword.

“Now, then.”

When he spun it around as if catching at it with the fingers of his right hand, he found the balance was nice near the blade. That meant the shaft was heavy, so as he rapidly spun the spear, he passed his swinging hands to the front and back.

“—————”

Finally, he caught it in his spread right hand.

He held it near the front.

...For now, I will use it like a spear.

Next, he judged whether to hold the blade to the side or upwards.

“Looks like I don’t have anything to teach you.”

Sakai spoke from the veranda while bending forward to rest his head in his hand. Muneshige looked back and held the blade out so he could see.

“The blade has been well maintained.”

“I had ‘Okutama’ look over it all beforehand. I used to have Sakakibara do it, but it’s been neglected since he was sent to Edo. It should be in perfect shape, though. ...Oh, and any thanks should go to Tamako.”

While continuing to work through the black disks in the back, “Okutama”

turned around and bowed toward Muneshige.

“Maintaining and fine-tuning equipment should go without saying. Over.”

“Wait,” said Sakai. “Was that an indirect way of scolding me?”

“Musashi” carried in enough tea for everyone.

“The problem is that you are aware of the problem yet do not fix it. Now, Sakai-sama, shouldn’t you tell him how to use Kamenuki? Over.”

“Probably, but I think it would be better if he figured it out himself. It’s better to find your own way to use something than to force yourself to use it the way someone else said to.”

“What do you mean?” asked Muneshige.

Sakai did not answer, but Muneshige did not press any further because he knew that was the kind of person Sakai was.

Meanwhile, Gin and “Asakusa” (in her new clothes) walked in from behind the house.

Gin held a few pieces of firewood in her large false arms. They had yet to be chopped.

“Master Muneshige. Use these to test it.”

She gently threw one high in the air toward him.

Gin threw the firewood toward Muneshige and his spear, and she watched the immediate result.

...I would expect nothing less.

The spear stabbed through the firewood. The meter long blade had stabbed halfway into the wood. The blade was thick, so the wood swelled out after being pierced.

“That will slice it in two.”

Muneshige said that with a bitter smile just as the firewood did indeed split in two.

However, something bothered Gin. That result was to be expected, but...

“Master Muneshige.”

“You noticed too, Gin?”

She had not, but he held his left palm up to eye level, asking her to throw another one.

She nodded and recalled the past. Back when he had still been training at the Tachibana house, he had gone through training much like this.

Her father had said it was to teach him how to deal with a midair enemy and then asked her to “throw one my way”. She had made a full-power overhand throw on the same level as the Valdés brother’s pitches, and she had aimed at the face. Her father had been mad at her, but she had not found it fair for him to be so angry after he successfully sliced it in two. Muneshige had then told her to use a gentle underhand throw and she had done so.

...I may have already been treating him kindly even then.

“Gin, you can use an overhand throw if you want.”

You intend to outdo my father!? I would expect no less, Master Muneshige.

Delighted, she did as he said. He spread his hands further apart on the shaft and swung the spear vertically.

“...”

With a solid sound, the airborne firewood was sliced apart and the two halves flew to the left and right.

He had split the wood. He had done so by swinging the long blade down into place, but Gin noticed something.

“It did not cut as sharply this time.”

It was different from before.

The first piece of firewood had been pierced noiselessly. It had pierced the wood so sharply that the fibrous structure had not had time to tear.

But this was different. The force of the blade’s collision had split the wood, so it had made a noise and the halves had flown in either direction. If it had cut as

sharply as the first time, there would have been no noise and the halves would not have flown away. It was the same blade, so what had caused the difference?

...What is this?

“Gin, can you throw one pretty high up?”

“Judge.”

He was testing rather than questioning, so she made an overhand throw like she used to.

...I used to be able to make a hundred meter long throw.

She threw it along an arc that would pass high above his head and he turned his back to her.

“Is this how it works?”

He used the spear to pierce the firewood as it passed over his head and flew into the distance.

Muneshige grasped what had happened through the tactile feedback before anything else.

...Would you call this “assistance”?

He faced Gin again and held up the spear. The firewood was skewered about halfway down the long blade.

“That was the same piercing power as the first time.”

As he held it up, the wood split and fell apart. Gin was the first to comment on this third result.

“Does it accelerate when piercing something? Is that how it felt?”

“Judge,” he replied because that was indeed how it had felt. “When you take aim and make the thrust, it moves forward. The first time, my actions were a little delayed, but it may have adjusted its movements to match me. So this third time was the spear’s true power. After all...”

“You were ‘chasing after’ the wood, yet it pierced it just as well as the first

time.”

“That’s right. I think the piercing assistance was fine-tuned from the beginning.”

Stabbing deep into the wood when it was thrown toward him was hardly a surprise.

But this third time, he had been stabbing at it after it passed over his head. The wood was light, so his strike should have simply knocked it away from him. And even if he had pierced it...

“The blade would not have stabbed halfway in as it did the first time.”

“Couldn’t you do it, Master Muneshige?”

“I was not trying to this time. In fact, I was trying to see what happened when I didn’t.”

But the result had been even greater than he had expected.

...And when it stabbed in, I felt like all resistance vanished.

He looked to Sakai and held Kamenuki up toward the man who was bending forward and resting his head in his hand.

“May I ask one thing?”

“Sure, What is it, Muneshige-kun?”

“Judge. Is there anything I should yell when activating it?”

“Do you like that kind of thing? Don’t you find it embarrassing?”

“I am used to it after yelling ‘amore’ for Gin.”

“Master Muneshige, please let mine be something special.”

“Fair enough,” he replied with a smile.

He looked to Sakai who got up.

“It isn’t anything that amazing. But, Muneshige-kun, what kind of power do you think Kamenuki has?”

“Limited assistance for piercing attacks. Would that be accurate?”

“Not quite,” replied Sakai.

...Not quite?

If he had been completely wrong, he could have changed his way of thinking about it. But a slight difference was trickier. However, Sakai did not give the actual answer.

“How about you, well, try it out some more? It can be tricky to use, but once you get the hang of it, I think you’ll use it better than I ever did.”

So...

“This may be selfish, but I’m hoping you’ll make this fun. Yes.”

A bell rang just as Sakai finished speaking.

It was the hourly bell of Musashi Ariadust Academy and it rang eight times.

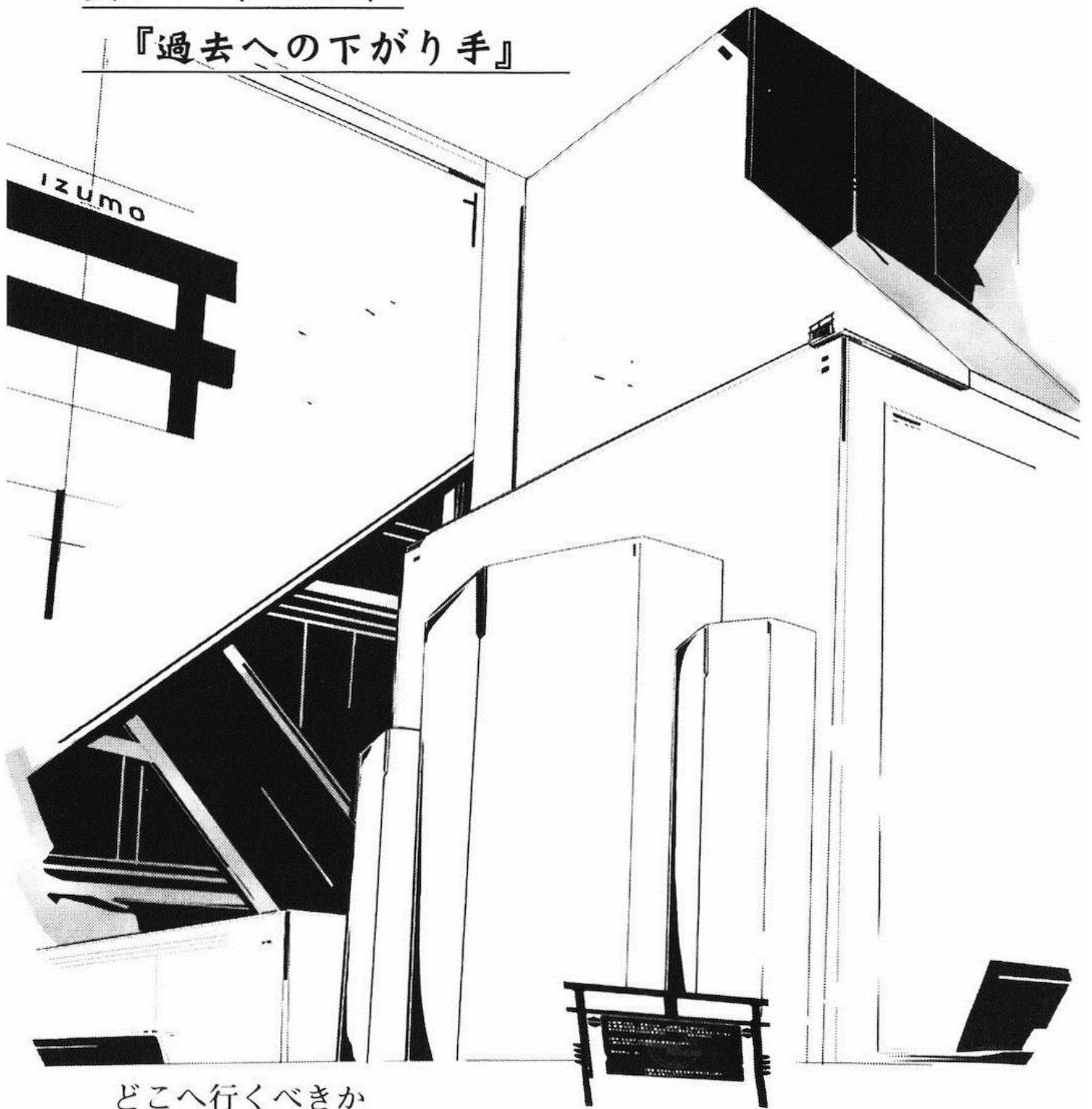
“Now, this would normally be when classes start, but I’m sure everyone will be preparing for their diplomatic jobs today. It must be tough having so much work to do.”

“Yes.” Muneshige nodded and adjusted his grip on the spear in his hands. “I think I will put a little more effort into this.”

Chapter 25: One who Steps Back from the Past

第二十五章

『過去への下がり手』



どこへ行くべきか
義務ではなく
己の心の決まり事として
配点（進行方向）

Where should I go?

Not as my duty

But as what I've set my heart on

Point Allocation (Direction of Progress)

The engine division took up the bottom of the Musashi, below the standard structures holding residential districts and the like.

The large space covered nearly the entire length of each ship, was divided between a port and starboard side, and was divided into sections from front to back to a certain extent.

The giant ether engines (which were divided into blocks), the cooling system, and the control system were all located there. The ether engines were over twenty meters tall and they created Blessings from the ether fuel sent from the Musashi's fuel tanks. Those Blessings were sent to the divine protection converter in the divine protection engine that managed most of the welfare systems, to the emblems that created the ocean on the ships' surfaces, and...

"To the gravitational cruising engines lined up underground."

That voice was drowned out by the sounds of construction.

It belonged to Isa of the Sanada Ten Braves. She currently sat in the gravitational cruising control block located even further port from the port engine division.

She had finished her morning job and was eating the breakfast provided for her. The breakfast was a rice ball with seaweed, a stick of pickled vegetables, and roasted beans. She appreciated the juice box of tea that came with it.

The installation floor was a level lower than the surrounding floor and it was made of a wire mesh. It was three layers thick, but what lay below could still be clearly seen through it.

...The gravitational cruising engines. This is my first time seeing these.

Just like shogi pieces, they were lined up in a grid over the several dozen

meters of the acceleration block. The lower section containing them was pulled outside during gravitational cruising and each acceleration block would work together to raise their serial output.

...It's pretty amazing.

This sure is nice, she honestly thought since she was the technician even in their ninja village.

But her job was not to create; it was to modify. Sanada Academy did not have the production or maintenance equipment for that, nor did they have the demand. They generally bought or inherited their guns and mobile shells from major corporations or other academies and then Isa would modify them for their own uses.

And in her opinion...

"This sure is nice."

"What is, Isa-kun?"

"Well," she replied while barely opening her mouth toward the empty space behind her. "Anayama, you do everything with your own ninja techniques, so you don't use anything like this."

"I still need to gather some supplies on site, though. Anyway, have you taken a liking to the Musashi?"

"I was only looking at it from the outside before, but it's really interesting this time."

"Can we get down to business now?"

"Testament," Isa raised her right shoulder to indicate what was wrapped around it. "These are the hemp cables used to transmit ether. It's fine Far Eastern hemp, so it's a real luxury..."

She looked down to the coil coated in dark blue plastic.

"I just heard the general plans down below and they're about to fine-tune the wiring of the gravitational accelerators. I think I'll hook up the cables I have on hand while I set things up for us."

“Then take these.”

After Anayama’s voice, something fell between Isa’s legs. They looked like tea juice boxes, but they did not contain tea. Isa picked them up.

“Ten, eleven, twelve. Okay, that’s enough. If I stick them at the base of the gravitational accelerators down below, it should stop Musashino’s rear port accelerators when they try to use them.”

“Testament. So afterwards, we can sell these to other major academies or use them ourselves to promote our own skills?”

“That’s right. ...It does bother me a little though. If only I was the kind of person who could feel jealous after seeing all this nice equipment.”

“That isn’t who you are. Besides, if you would destroy something out of jealousy, you wouldn’t modify guns you bought from elsewhere.”

“You’ve been paying attention, Anayama. ...Oh, and one other thing.”

Isa held up a hand as if to swipe at the empty air.

“I’ve been trying out some things on my own and I think I can make an autonomous one. The parts are everywhere on the Ariake right now, so I’ve got a real advantage.”

“I think you’re the one having the most fun this time, Isa-kun.”

“It seems to have been a nice change of pace for Nezu too, so hooray for Musashi, I guess. You make sure to help out Yuri, okay?”

She just about laughed, but she held back since no one could see Anayama at the moment. Instead, she took a bite of her rice ball.

...I wonder.

They were trying to do something about this giant ship.

Just a few ninja from a powerless academy who were viewed as unneeded were trying to do something about it.

It would be amazing if they pulled it off, but at the same time, how could they call themselves the Ten Braves if they could not do it?

...Still, the world is headed to even greater heights.

After all, there was an opponent even this giant ship could not handle.

That's pretty scary, she thought with a sigh while drinking some tea to join the seaweed aftertaste.

"Hey, what do you think? We've done a lot to try to score some points since we ended up at Sanada Academy, but..."

But...

"I have to wonder if we've made it to the world stage."

"We have. We've been there the whole time."

Anayama's immediate response was hardly unexpected, but she could not help but wonder these things despite being the oldest of them.

"Hey, so if we're on the world stage..."

I wonder.

"When will we lose the 'unneeded' title?"

Isa ignored the silent presence that Anayama created.

"We belong to Sanada, not our previous home. I think we need to have more confidence in that fact."

"I know that, but..."

Yes, she too knew what came next.

"What work would I accept isn't 'unneeded', right?"

"That's right. We need a job that will convince us that we are 'needed'. In a way, that is how we can restore ourselves. So..."

So...

"Everything we're doing concerning Musashi is meaningful. While Hashiba damaged Musashi, not even they could stop it from cruising."

"Anayama, you're surprisingly good at getting me excited about my work."

"I like theatrics. Once this job is complete, I'd like to stop by a theatre in Mito

before heading home to Sanada.”

“I wonder what they’re showing right now. Something mecha would be great.”

“I think the theatrical version of Mobile Checkpoint Kanjin was released. To get through the checkpoint, Benkei begins beating Yoshitsune to hide Yoshitsune’s identity, but in the divine TV version, I think Benkei was the city-size Super Benkei and a punch misfire destroyed the checkpoint. The checkpoint destruction scene was very well done, but I’d like to see something different in the theatrical version.”

“Anayama, your interests are so eclectic I can never get a read on them,” said Isa. “But anyway, Nezu and the others are doing a lot of work too, so how is all that going?”

“What do you mean?”

“Something’s a little off, isn’t it? Like with Yuri.”

Anayama did not answer. He was everyone’s manager, so he probably wanted to avoid commenting on their actions like that.

...But this still shows his personal opinion on it.

She thought middle management jobs had to be tough, but in that and everything else, they all trusted each other as they did their jobs. So...

“I guess I’ll just do my job here.”

She gathered her things and stood up while munching on the last of the pickled vegetables.

“Physically stopping the Musashi is my job.”

She then heard a girl’s voice separate from the surrounding construction noises.

“Hey! Can you all help get everything ready so we can head down below?”

It was Hiro. She waved to everyone and pointing down with her gloved hands.

“We’re getting to the last part of the work starting today, so even the newcomers need to work hard.”

“My job, hm?”

A voice spoke in a dimly-lit, spacious, and elevated space.

It was Yoshiyasu’s voice.

She stood in a hangar with a sign labeled Musashino 1st Underground Hangar. A portion of the large equipment such as gods of war and mobile shells were stored here, but it was relatively quiet because most of the gods of war had been moved out.

“Miss Satomi, is this good enough? We did our best to make it cute.”

Engine Division Representative Taizou took a breath in front of Righteousness.

“Matching Mogami’s tastes is no easy task, but I did what I could.”

The blue heavy god of war with dog face armor stood there. Yoshiyasu looked at it and the swords at its waist on either side.

“I know I was asking for a lot, so I’m grateful you did it. I didn’t expect you to have the white for a girl’s armored clothing.”

Unlike Righteousness’s previous combat-focused blue armored clothing, it now had long white equipment such as a skirt.

“Well, we had a spare for the Suzaku that hadn’t been colored yet, so we just shortened that up a bit. You’ve let us take a look at both Righteousness and Yatsufusa, so it’s time we gave you a present as thanks. Look, they coordinated this.”

He pointed to the back where some light gods of war were cutting some armor canvas into a sail to hang from Musashi’s derrick masts. They were over three meters tall and, when they noticed her, they looked up from their giant scissors and marking pin to raise a hand in greeting.

Yoshiyasu bowed back.

“———”

She realized she had grown more humble than when she had been in Satomi.

But that was not a bad thing. She was not supporting, protecting, or guiding them; she was simply receiving their help.

Of course, since she had the full authority of Satomi, Musashi had to treat her carefully.

...But I can't just sit around as a guest.

That was why she wanted to be on the scene as much as possible.

But...

"..."

She looked up to Yatsufusa standing motionless next to Righteousness.

"Director."

"Judge. What is it? If you don't like it, we can remake it."

The light gods of war quickly began shaking their bodies back and forth and moving their hands in a gesture of "Please don't. Please don't."

Sympathetically realizing that the higher ups were strict everywhere, Yoshiyasu asked Taizou a question.

"Do you really not know how Yatsufusa is activated?"

He briefly stopped moving.

"Hmm..."

He scratched his head, but not to say he did not know. It felt more like he was trying to figure out how to explain it. Since Yoshiyasu knew the general answer, she started for him.

"Are the artificial emotions of Yatsufusa's program rejecting me?"

"That's the only way I can explain it." Taizou sighed. "The eight virtues, hm? I'm not the most virtuous person, but I do have to wonder what kind of person has all eight."

"The last two Chancellors could pilot Yatsufusa."

"Yes, that's what makes it so tricky," he said. "No one's perfect, so if they could pilot it, the eight virtues it wants must be its own interpretation of them. ...Of course, that raises the question of what those eight virtues are."

"I appreciate that you're investigating this."

“I don’t mind.” He waved a hand forward and back. “The Suzaku is a difficult machine, but so is this to be honest.”

“It’s that bad?”

“Judge.” He pointed to different parts of Yatsufusa and smiled for some reason. “Listen. The program that controls it is interlinked with far too many parts of the machine. Basically, it’s difficult to swap out parts. I knew it was going to have some severe balancing issues from the moment it had eight power systems inside, but this thing wasn’t built to swap out the parts for long-term use.”

“Judge. I understand. We were prepared from the moment it was built two Chancellors ago.”

Because...

“Yatsufusa is currently one of the most powerful gods of war in the Far East, but it doesn’t have any divine tech like the Four Sacred Beasts do. And since technology is constantly being improved, a lighter and more powerful god of war will be possible in a decade or two.”

“Whether something like this could be mass-produced is the real question, though. That’s just how much of a threat this thing is.”

Was that supposed to make her feel better? She did feel a little happy, but reality was a different matter.

“The Chancellor before last said it only had to last two years. Yatsufusa only had to remain one of the most powerful in the world for two years. At the time, I wondered why she was being so fainthearted.”

But now she understood.

“When Yatsufusa was completed two years ago in 1646, she had probably predicted that the nations would all begin to take action with the Apocalypse approaching. She probably thought the Warring States period would come to an end and the world would grow more peaceful. So...”

So...

“According to the Testament descriptions, after Matsudaira’s reign begins, the

Satomi clan falls during my generation and nearly dies out. She left me this powerful god of war so I would be prepared when that time came.”

Yoshiyasu sighed.

She had not understood any of this.

She had been chasing after her sister and that man for two years...no, even longer. She had chased after them, constantly watched them, and thought she understood them.

...But I never realized what it was they were looking to.

They had probably been looking much further into the future than her, so she had been unable to judge what they wanted there. And now something else came to mind.

“Director, I wonder what they wanted from me.”

“There’s no way I could know that, miss. ...I’m a mere technician, not a student. It’s true I’ve used quite a bit of machinery and I think Yatsufusa and Righteousness are pretty cute. I...no, we can prepare them and send them out there...but you know what?”

You know what?

“You have to feel your preparations for yourself.”

“...Feel them?”

“Judge,” he said. “Some people can get it from themselves, but if you don’t feel that you’re helping something, it’s all a waste of time. So you don’t receive help. You don’t go out to get it, either. That’s not quite it. ...So this is what I think you do.” He smiled bitterly. “What matters is that you prepare it for yourself. You have to prepare it by deciding you want to get some help. You need to be ready to pick it up when it rolls right in front of you.”

He laughed.

“Well, maybe you can’t do that yet.”

He slapped her back. It was a powerful enough blow to knock the breath out of

her and the noise and pain reminded her of the past.

She had once had someone who would do that to her.

“Director...why can’t I do it?”

“You don’t have enough experience.”

He bared his teeth in a smile and pointed to the gods of war and adults behind him.

“All of them have had someone leave or say goodbye. They complain about it, they groan in their sleep, and they’ll come to a sudden stop when they remember it. Everyone on Musashi has experienced goodbye. They’re all focused on the past, but none of them are walking toward the past.”

He crossed his arms and the gods of war behind him took the same pose.

“Let me tell you something while I can, miss. Don’t chase after what you’ve lost. If you do, you’ll move toward the past and lose the time you need to build up your present self. If you get stuck in the quagmire of the past, you’ll do nothing but remember the time before the loss and walk further and further toward the past. You’ll only get more and more stuck there.”

So...

“So look to the past and cry. Face the past head-on and turn your back on the present, but make sure you cry and step back. You can keep your back to the present, but make sure to step back toward it. That way, each time you cry, you’re putting more distance between yourself and the past. That will solve most everything.”

“I’m not sure I get what you’re saying.”

Yoshiyasu asked a question.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Because machines can’t lie.”

“That’s right.”

The maintenance workers surrounding Righteousness raised their arms in her direction.

“Your god of war has some reinforcements in places. From what we can see, it’s focusing way too much on when you land.”

“But we can tell that wasn’t your doing. There are also reinforcements on the wings and main frame that the pilot wouldn’t even know about.”

“What we’re saying is,” they said, “Satomi’s technicians were making sure you could do things right even if you didn’t ask them to. Machines don’t lie. ...We can see the intent that went into them.”

“You heard them.” The engine division director grabbed her shoulder and turned her to the right. “Satomi wasn’t just left in the hands of the students. It was left in our hands too and we’ve been taught how we’re supposed to inherit that. Miss, this place isn’t the same as Satomi, but we can promise you that you’ll be able to move ‘forward’ just as much here as in Satomi. So...make sure you eventually look to us properly.”

He gave her a push on the back, telling her to go. As she wondered where to, she saw someone up ahead.

“Satomi President!”

The vassal was waving from the passageway entrance on the right wall.

“The Chancellor and the others are apparently going shopping at Mito, but how about we get ready to go now? Our rooms on the diplomatic ship are apparently ready and the shops and restaurants inside are running! The Treasurer’s Aide gave us a ridiculous amount of money for our trip! I just about bought a house with it, but I managed to control myself! Let’s go buy a bunch of clothes and snacks!”

Her motivations are pretty simple, thought Yoshiyasu before turning back to the others.

She bowed and then jogged over toward the vassal.

Mitotsudaira hung her blushing head.

She was inside a tailor’s shop in the Mito city on the surface. One made an order in the front room and the clothing was made in the back room. That left a

fair amount of time spent waiting around, but there was tea and food prepared to help pass the time.

She was currently waiting for her clothing for the trip to Sviet Rus.

...I had to hand over my coat and skirt so they could take the measurements, so the tatami mats are kind of ticklish.

Suzu and Urquiaga of the Date group and Yoshiyasu and Adele of the Mogami group were apparently already preparing to leave inside the diplomatic ships at the land port, but it was taking her group longer because the Chancellor and Horizon had to get ready too.

They needed to hurry, but they wanted to avoid rushing and forgetting something. The diplomatic ship and the transport ships that would accompany it were ready to go, so it was now up to them.

Far Eastern tailor-made clothing was quick and reliable at times like this, and she had something to do while waiting for the clothes to be made.

...I-I need to choose a choker design...

The idiot and Horizon peered at her from the side.

She was selecting a choker to replace the one lost in the battle with her mother. As promised, he and Horizon were with her. Kimi and Asama had come too, but...

“Heh heh. Look, Mitotsudaira. Isn’t this design of clothing really cute?”

...What is going on here!?

Chapter 26: Emotional One on the Tatami Mats

第二十六章

『畳上の感情持ち』



落ち着くまでもなく
動く事をなくしても
それは動く内心の告白
配点（攻撃）

Without even calming down

Or moving at all

This is a confession of the movement in your heart

Point Allocation (Attack)

Mitotsudaira assessed her options while sweating nervously for a number of reasons.

Inside an open tatami mat room, she was looking at the row of chokers an employee had brought out.

“U-um, Horizon, what about this?”

She held out one of the samples and Horizon stared at both the choker and at Mitotsudaira.

“Judge. That one is cowhide, isn’t it? I would think one with a less processed surface would be more delicious.”

“I’m pretty sure that would be too hard.”

“Now, now,” said Horizon. “I have determined this is the foundational symbol of your past relationship with Toori-sama, so please take this seriously.”

Horizon tapped the idiot’s shoulder a few times and then spoke to him.

“Listen. It needs to be cowhide. Nothing else really matters. Mitotsudaira-sama is easily swayed by meat, after all. Oh, and it has to be of high quality.”

...That’s fairly true, but I’m not sure it applies to clothing.

At any rate, it was now his turn.

“This one with decorative chains fits your overall image pretty well, don’t you think?”

“Y-yes, that sounds good.”

“Oh, but you fight a lot, so this one with a simple silver decoration on one side might be better.”

“Y-yes, that sounds good.”

“Oh? Look, look. This one’s got a Mito logo. That’s so cool!”

“Y-yes, that sounds good too.”

...Does everything sound good to me!?

She supposedly had the final say here, but as time passed, she seemed to be losing her individuality. And...

“Nate, can you lift your neck up?”

On occasion, he would casually place his fingers around her neck to put a choker on her. The shaking of her hair when his hands touched it and the rubbing at her throat felt ticklish, so a voice nearly escaped her lips.

...Kh! R-resist! Resist!!

“C’mon, stay, stay.”

He suddenly scratched at her throat.

“...!!”

A ticklish scratching reached her throat.

He was treating her like a dog and it had been a surprise, but she also felt a mixture of animalistic fear at having her defenseless throat scratched and knightly subservience telling her to allow it. Also...

...Ah.

I’ve seen mother have father do this, so I must be the same as her. Yes, this is, um, yes, quite dangerous. Or should I say it feels good? Um...

“...!”

She was filled with a mixture of the discovery that she had a weak point, the realization that he was scratching at it, and the determination to resist it. She did her very best to not let it show.

“Good girl. Now stay like that. Stay.”

His fingers suddenly slid down to the bottom of her throat. The sensation surprised her, and...

...Hiin!!

She distinctly sensed something being secreted in the area deep below her navel. Sultry sweat poured from her body, a tremor ran through her body, and her throat, mouth, and tongue went a little limp.

...Hyahh!!!!

She nearly passed out. She had three options: collapse limply to the floor, collapse onto him and rub her throat against him, or desperately resist by pounding her hands against the floor. But as the ticklish and itchy attack on her throat continued...

“If there was a tail here, would it be wagging like crazy right now?”

Behind her, Kimi suddenly stuck her hand down along the line leading into Mitotsudaira’s butt.

...Hh!



Mitotsudaira's butt reflexively hopped up to escape, and that caused her body to collapse forward.

She tried to support herself on the boy sitting in front of her, but she did not make it in time and could not reach him.

"Gh..."

So she ended up lying on the floor, hiding the tremor running from her throat to her lower stomach. Her lower body was propped up on her knees, which embarrassingly raised her butt into the air, but she felt that making any odd movements now would make her insides go crazy. So she pressed her knees together and tensed her inner thighs to bear with it.

"Good girl. Good girl."

A hand stroked her head.

"Are you okay? Are you so nervous about going to Russia that you're feeling bad?"

...I'm not feeling bad! This is the exact opposite!!

But now Horizon was stroking her head too.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa."

...That's for horses!!

Despite her mental complaints, having her head rubbed was not unpleasant. She did not like being treated like a dog, but other than that, this was the same as social grooming and she kind of liked it. But...

"..."

She made sure to maintain a displeased expression as she got up.

"Ohh," said the idiot and Horizon as she fixed her disheveled hair and took a breath.

...Oh?

She used the mirror next to her to check on the choker he had put on her.

It looked a lot like the one she had worn before. It was simple and it had decorative points to attach chains. She traced her fingers along it and her mirror image touched the attached silver decorations.

...I-it's a little too simple, but it might be just right with some chains added on.

As she tried to decide what to do, the idiot peered into the mirror next to her.

"Is it too plain? I was also considering some flashier and rougher ones."

"Did you not think those would suit me?"

"It isn't that. Your Maman put one like that on me in the candy house, so they really make me think of...bondage, I guess you'd say?"

...Wh-what was my mother doing!?

Horizon started to remove a tatami mat instead of the wall for her running gag, so they stopped her. Mitotsudaira realized Kimi and Asama were smiling her way, so she used both hands to gently lift up the choker around her neck.

While showing it off to him and Horizon, she wished she could have been smiling.

"I'll go with this one. I want it to be well-made, so even if I order it now, I doubt it will be ready for a while."

...They bring excitement wherever they go.

Masazumi sipped at a teacup of peach nectar at the café opposite the tailor's shop.

As one of those remaining on the Musashi, she did not need to shop for clothes or anything else, but the Aoi Sister had dragged her here regardless.

"I'm supposed to take a break here?"

She looked around and saw a hill. The town spread out on either side of the road leading down the hill to the east. Even further in the distance were the green fields, a winding river, and the sea.

She had heard the town's population was about five thousand. That was large in terms of the history recreation, but small in terms of a buffer zone linking

Kantou with Oushuu. According to Mitotsudaira, lord of this land...

“This is my territory, but the Testament Union keeps careful watch and there isn’t much I can do with it.”

...But now they’ve started some construction in places.

After the destruction of Edo and Satomi, the people of Mito may have sensed danger in their own futures. There would likely have been antipathy if only the Musashi had come, but they had brought the Ariake too.

“It’s probably around there.”

The Ariake was in stealth mode, so she could not see it in the sky from her storefront seat. The massive obstacle sitting in the sky created great changes to the air, but those alteration patterns could be used to bring rain and restrict the radiative cooling of the surface to create warm weather. That had apparently made for an excellent early summer harvest and the markets were also doing well.

The way the townspeople saw it, Mito’s ruler was uninfluenced by the Testament Union, had somehow managed to reach Kantou, and was using the Ariake to protect Mito from Hashiba.

That may have been why Mitotsudaira occasionally visited the surface. Based on the conversation in the tailor’s shop, she may have been acquainted with the restaurants.

“Nate, is there anywhere we can get some food before heading out?”

“Fine, fine. But we can’t stay long, so how about we order some meat and have a Genghis Khan barbeque on the diplomatic ship? I have arranged to have a small transport ship carry us to the land port, so we can leave for Sviet Rus as soon as we’re doing shopping. See?”

Mitotsudaira looked toward the northern forest where a single small transport ship was waiting in midair.

“That will shorten our travel time. It is going to spoil us a little, though.”

...Things sure are different when you own the land.

Masazumi looked around and saw the circulation of goods within Mito.

Musashi was also securing things like vegetables and making preserved foods out of them, but...

“Oh...”

A transport ship rose from Mito’s civilian land port at the bottom of the hill. It slowly passed by overhead and continued past the forest on the other side of the hill.

...It’s headed to the land ports that Musashi’s residents were taken to.

The wooded hills a little to the east of Mito’s center had been cleared and emergency land ports had been made.

There were eight in all. While they were called land ports, they were really just clearing with a source of water, a waste treatment plan using the black algae creatures, and one of the Asama Shrine’s airdropped shrines. The residents of each ship that were not involved in the remodeling work were living in the modified transport ships there.

Based on the reports from Ookubo, who was partially in charge of that, life in the land ports was calm due to the stable supply of food and fuel.

...If this is what I end up thinking about, this isn’t much of a break from work.

But...

“Okay.”

She decided to use this trip to the surface to have a nice break for once.

This is my first real break on the surface since Magdeburg, she thought while appreciating the solid ground below her feet.

...Should I think of this as “visiting” the surface or “returning” to the surface?

The Musashi was a mobile aerial city ship. If she had truly become a Musashi resident, then she was “visiting” the surface.

“Heh heh. What is it, sitting politician? Are you so lost in thought that you’re feeling like reciting a poem or humming!? You are, aren’t you!? But you’re not! Oh, dear. This poor girl is sitting here without reciting a single poem or fondling a

single breast! In other words, she's in self-denial!"

"I feel like your conclusion is oddly accurate, but everything else was completely incomprehensible, Aoi Sister."

Masazumi looked to the others in the tailor's shop. Inside the large tatami mat room, Mitotsudaira was waiting for her clothes to be made and Asama stood behind a square of partitions as she removed her clothes and had her measurements taken. Her bare shoulders stuck above the partition and a tape measure was used to measure her shoulder width.

"You know what?"

"What is it, Masazumi?" asked Asama.

"W-well..."

She had a sudden urge to comment on the sensation below her feet.

She could feel the ground there. She would sometimes descend to the surface for work, but it had been a while (from Magdeburg to now) since she had done so to take a break from it all. The sensation of the earth pushing back at the soles of her feet told her that they really had traveled all the way from Magdeburg to here.

"—————"

She pictured a map of the Far East and visualized their path from the Chugoku region to Kantou.

...I'm amazed we survived that.

No, she decided.

...We were protected.

Most likely, that would only hit home later on. So...

"Never mind." She shrugged. "I'll tell you much later once all this is over."

"Heh heh heh. This flat-chested bookworm! You sound just like a teasing woman!"

The Aoi Sister pointed both hands at Masazumi's eyes and followed her gaze with the fingers.

“You’re supposed to be looking at whoever you’re in love with! And... ‘You know what? ...No, never mind.’ ‘What is it, honey?’ ‘Heh heh. Well, you see...’ Just like that!”

“Kimi! Kimi! Leave that strange world of yours and come back to us! This isn’t the Musashi! And don’t grab and shake my booth’s partition!”

“What does it matter, Asama! That’s just how it is! And look where that crossdressing politician’s scandalous gaze is focused! Right here! On this manly errrrrrrection!!!!”

“Aoi Sister, that pillar clearly belongs to the building, not a person.”

That did not slow down the crazy person in the slightest. She pretended to cry while slapping her palm against the pillar.

“What does that matter? Anyone can lust after a smooth pillar! The sound effect would be Onbashiraaaaaa! Isn’t that right, foolish brother!?”

“Yeah! I can do it! I can totally do it!!”

He didn’t even have to think about it!? she thought as sister and brother cheered and high-fived.

“That’s right. You can, can’t you!? ...I can’t, but you give it your best shot, foolish brother.”

“Sis! Sis! I’m a little confused right now, but your engine’s running full throttle, isn’t it!?”

“What’s wrong with that!? Besides, that politician hasn’t had enough romance lately, so you go help her out! Don’t you agree, Mitotsudaira!? When I’m working in the library, you always hide romance books below those chivalry ones!”

“Don’t expose private information in my own territory!!”

The managers of the surrounding shops came out and started jotting down this new information in their memo pads labeled “Special Customer Notes”. Then they all raised their right hands.

“We dedicate the prosperity of Mito to our lord and to natto!”

“We dedicate the prosperity of Mito to our lord and to natto!”

They continued chanting, smiled toward Mitotsudaira, and returned to their shops while raising wooden signs saying “Please Visit Us!” After watching that, Masazumi looked over to Mitotsudaira whose mouth was spread horizontally.

“At least they’re supportive of their ruler and their signature product.”

“Thanks for finding a positive way to look at that...”

Masazumi sighed while watching Mitotsudaira hang her head.

“Everything’s the same as always.”

Asama and Kimi were shrieking behind the partition in the tailor’s shop and a piece of someone’s uniform was thrown outside the partition each time. Horizon was calmly nodding in approval as she watched and a sudden thought came to Masazumi.

...This is peace.

Peace.

It was the natural state of affairs, but it was out of reach given the current age and the approaching Apocalypse.

Whether they would be able to acquire it or not was up to what happened next, but...

“The ambassadors have even more to do.”

Masazumi smiled a little and looked to Mitotsudaira.

“I’m counting on you.”

“Yes,” agreed Horizon before tapping the idiot on the shoulder. “I am not counting on much from you.”

“Oh? Then you’re counting on a little from me?”

“Yes. You can at least function as a shield.”

The idiot sat down on the bench, wrapped his arms around his knees, and began humming a strange song. *As long as he’s quiet, I don’t really care,* decided

Masazumi.

Musashi: “Masazumi-sama. Suzu-sama and Urquiaga-sama’s diplomatic ship and Satomi-sama and Adele-sama’s diplomatic ship have left the surface ground port. While the reading is still faint, we have also detected the advance fleets from Date, Mogami, and Sviet Rus on their way to welcome them.”

After that, she heard a sound. It was a low but long sound. It resembled like creaking wood and it was accompanied by movement in the western forest and the arrival of a salty smell.

Two sets of a diplomatic ship and accompanying transport ships began to move northwest or north. Those two fleets were on their way to Date and Mogami.

...So they’ve left.

“Then it’s about time we got ready at the port.”

Mitotsudaira pointed into the tailor’s shop where an employee was holding up cloth wrapping containing the completed clothes.

Masazumi stood up.

“Now, then.”

She faced the group in the tailor’s shop and started walking across the road to them.

At that exact moment, that main road cutting east to west through Mito was annihilated by a beam of light also running east to west.

It was a direct hit.

Chapter 27: Leaping Girl on the Street

第二十七章

『街道上の跳ね娘』

いきなりの事に
構えるべきか
喜ぶべきか
配点（性格）



When something sudden happens

Should you put up your defenses

Or should you rejoice?

Point Allocation (Personality)

Futayo was lost in thought inside the city of Mito.

...This is troubling.

But this had nothing to do with her. She was referring to the contents of the magazine in her left hand.

She did have some thoughts about herself after seeing Muneshige and “Asakusa’s” battle at Sakai’s house that morning. Simply put, she was inexperienced, but...

...I don’t know what it is I lack.

She had decided to try out a variety of things as a part of her training while also fulfilling her job as Vice Chancellor. “Musashi” had given her a list of the dojos, training grounds, and classrooms run by skilled Musashi residents.

But when she had visited a nearby dojo, she had found the place empty. Unsurprisingly, the people had moved to the surface land ports for the Musashi’s remodeling. She had then gone down to the surface and visited an IZUMO-affiliated training ground that looked like the biggest one, but they had assumed she was challenging the dojo and attacked her far too enthusiastically. She had ended up defeating them all and received the dojo’s sign. Carrying it had been a pain, so she had sold it at a pawnshop.

...How rude of them to think I was challenging the dojo.

Besides, challenging the dojo would mean defeating every one of its students and then stealing their sign.

“...Oh?”

I ended up doing exactly that, didn’t I?

...How could I be so careless!?

However, what was done was done, so she decided not to worry about it. Besides, she had already decided to go around trying out different Far Eastern sweets as a reward after each place she visited.

...I always want something sweet when I'm exhausted.

And defeating those beginners is especially exhausting. They run away, so you have to chase them down. The Honda clan believes in equality, so we treat beginners and experts exactly the same. Even on the divine TV show I saw the other day, father almost had an assembly line set up to circumcise everyone who lost to him. Maybe I should have thrown those dojo students into the Ueno god's shrine.

Still, selling the sign had given her enough to cover the cost, so she decided to go treat herself to some sweets. *Challenging dojos may be a decent method of securing a sweets budget*, she realized while checking the local magazine "Koumon Walker".

The opening feature was "Mito Lord Mitotsudaira-sama's Selection of the Best Meat Restaurants". The photos all showed a smiling Mitotsudaira with a bunch of the others from their class in the background, but Futayo was only interested in the sweets section. The main page featured a smiling Mitotsudaira saying dangerous things like, "No matter how much you eat here, the meat keeps coming! Such a wonderful challenge!" But next to her the vassal was eating a Mito Plum Éclair and giving a pitiful review of "Wowww! It's so sour and so delicious! It's sourlicious! Or delisour! Ahhhh, here it comes, comes, comes, comes!" Futayo decided to go with that for today.

...That shop is over this way.

She knew her way around Mito well enough because she was one of those pictured behind Mitotsudaira from the other day. She looked to the rooftop watchtowers and treetop perches for flying races.

"...?"

As she did, she sensed movement in the wind.

...What is this?

That is the wind created when people move, thought Futayo.

A town had clear passageways for air and people to move through, but this wind was even more distinct.

The winds created by people would carry a certain current through the town, so when someone was moving differently from the usual flow of traffic, a small distortion of the air would differ from the overall current.

If the person was moving slowly, that distortion would be gentle and calm.

But this was different.

These two movements were sharp and traveled far into the distance.

“Hm.”

Even if she was currently focusing on her training, she was still the Vice Chancellor.

In that case, she thought while creating her own wind in the streets.

Hers was equally sharp and traveled just as far.

As soon as she accelerated forward, she saw something.

As she looked to the town’s row of rooftops, she saw a light slice east to west along the main road.

...That was...!?

“An attack from a divine weapon!?”

Mito’s main road was torn into by a straight line running east to west.

Suzu sensed it from the diplomatic ship making a gentle spiraling ascent in preparation to travel north. She was on the terrace that would also be used for meetings.

She had been preparing to wave to the others who she assumed could see her from below, but her senses picked up a blade-like “sharpness” piercing east to west through Mito.

The attack was probably about five hundred meters long but quite narrow. It

could not have been more than six meters wide, so it only blew away the fronts of the roadside shops and tore deep into the road itself.

It reminded Suzu of something.

...Ex. Caliburn?

Once before, she had sensed that sword which protected England.

It should have been with English Queen Elizabeth at the moment, but she had heard nothing about Elizabeth coming to Mito. She had viewed Mito's land port from Musashino's bridge on a daily basis, but there had not been any ships from England there. Besides, there was no reason for Elizabeth to come here.

...Other than doing something mean to Tenzou-kun, I guess.

She did not like that she was assuming bad things about people. But...

"Toori-kun and the others..."

She was too far away to perceive them. The disturbance from the heat and wind was part of it, but her ship seemed to have decided it should focus on its duty and hurry away. She did her best to perceive the situation on the surface while being taken away.

"———!?"

The wind is gone, she thought.

The great wave of stormy destructive heat had vanished from the distant road and she could weakly detect something below that wave.

"Toori-kun!"

Masazumi looked forward while holding a hand up to protect her eyes from the dazzling light.

...Am I alive?

The road had been destroyed by a straight line from east to west. It looked like it had been torn apart by a thick blade all at once. The eaves of all the roadside shops had been torn into by about a meter. As had the walls. Even the damage to the road took on a shallow V-shape about a meter deep.

The air must have been lost because wind poured in from either side toward the center. The chairs, tables, and products were blown out from the stores, so the workers all frantically ran out.

Masazumi had been crossing the road, but she was fine. Also, there was no sign of the east to west destruction near her.

It should have been a direct hit, so why? She found a back in a summer uniform to her east. It was Mitotsudaira.

“Mitotsudaira, did you protect me?”

“Unfortunately, it wasn’t just me.”

The silver wolf smiled a little and faced east.

“I, Mito Lord Nate Mitotsudaira, shall punish whoever has disturbed my land before I leave for Sviet Rus.”

She then raised what she held in her hand. The weapon had protected everyone behind her from the previous beam of light.

“Ex. Collbrande. This came from Mary...no, I should call her the 1st Special Duty Officer’s Aide. I think it flew here from the Ariake, but I will gladly borrow it.”

Two movements immediately followed.

One was Mitotsudaira holding Excalibur up in defense.

And the other...

“Hit!!”

Asama fired five rapid-fire shots at the enemy likely located down the road.

Five arrows tore through the wind.

Asama saw Hanami spin on her right shoulder while clapping her hands five times in a row. Asama then made her follow through movement and used her Konoha false eye to follow the arrows as they flew past Mitotsudaira.

The arrows would target motion and had been given extra speed, but they

were actually training arrows.

...Please hit!

For a shrine maiden, firing at a person was generally forbidden. Even when used in defense, it was only allowed when she or someone else's life was in danger or when her opponent was illegally trespassing and intent on destroying her residence. The only other exceptions were...

...When training and as a warning!

"That's why I brought training arrows that have the arrowhead removed!"

"Heh heh heh. Asama, did you want to shoot someone that badly?"

"I suppose that is another way of looking at it! Isn't it!?"

The arrows only had enough of an impact spell to make it known when they hit. It would be a challenge to even injure someone with one, but in a battle between experts...

...Even a slight impact can throw off their stance and act as a warning!

So she had not hesitated to fire. But...

"..."

Then she briefly hesitated. She had trained her rapid-fire technique, so if their opponent had not yet approached or attacked, should she perhaps fire once more to hold them back?

...Hmm.

She groaned in her heart, but the idiot shouted over from the right.

"Asama! If you're gonna shoot, now's your chance!!"

Ehh? Toori-kun, wh-what are you talking about? C'mon, I wasn't thinking about shooting, so why would you say that? But it is true this is my chance and this is a dangerous situation. Yes. I have no other choice. Just look at all that anticipation in Toori-kun's face. Yes, if one of our shrine's customers expects this of me, I have to do it. Yes. Then maybe just a little. Yes!

"Tomo! Tomo!" shouted Mitotsudaira. "What's that weird aura coming from you!?"

That's probably the enemy's aura.

"Hit!!"

Mitotsudaira saw four consecutive sets of five rapid-fire shots.

Every last one of them flew in gentle but violent curves toward their target.

The ether light of acceleration spells trailed after all twenty high-speed arrows.

"...!"

Then another spell sign frame shattered and they accelerated further. This was not just acceleration. With a second and third stage like this, the acceleration spells could be arranged on the sides to shift the arrows' trajectories.

...Th-that's just being cruel!

She was honestly shocked. She had originally considered training the instantaneous acceleration she had gained in M.H.R.R. by dodging Asama's arrows, but after asking Asama just how much she could do, Mitotsudaira had rejected the idea as too dangerous.

Mitotsudaira spotted something at the border between unharmed and destroyed road past the flying arrows.

...There they are!

A girl with armor attached to a blue-dyed M.H.R.R. girl's uniform stood five hundred meters away. She had long blonde hair, a tall Far-Eastern hat, and...

"Large breasts!"

Shut up, my king, she thought while looking to the girl's weapon.

...A spear?

It was a cross-shaped half-sickle spear. Or perhaps calling it a cross-shaped L spear was more accurate. The straight blade had a secondary blade at the base that formed something of an L shape.

However, the bottom of the spear looked odd to Mitotsudaira. It should have been just as skinny as the shaft, but it was long and thick like a mallet.

Also, a light appeared. Bluish-white light surrounded the long blade.

“That’s the color of the previous blast!”

Mitotsudaira decided the next attack was coming as soon as that light had accumulated enough, but she was prepared this time and Asama’s arrows would arrive soon.

As soon as she realized the enemy could not attack in time, she saw an explosion of light.

...Did she fire it in desperation!?

No. The ether light had not built up enough for that. Plus, the explosion of light was not directed toward them. It had been fired behind the enemy, from the bottom of the spear held under her arm.

An explosion of light burst back from the spear, kicking the spear and its bearer forward.

“She’s using a thruster to come this way!?”

Then Asama’s arrows flew in. The lead five were on a direct course.

But the enemy leaped forward regardless.

She was pushed forward by the acceleration light pressurized by multiple sign frames that burst from the back of the spear under her right arm.

“Ex. Collbrande?” she said. “This should make for a decent challenge!”

She took a step toward Mitotsudaira.

“Finish this, Caledfwlch.”

An explosion of light launched the enemy forward faster than Asama’s arrows.

...Eh?

Mitotsudaira lost sight of the enemy, but not because Asama’s arrows got in the way as they dropped down and not because the enemy had decided to move to the bottom of the V-shaped gouge in the road.

It was simply due to her speed.

The enemy approached like a thrown spear. Blonde hair glided through the

bottom of the V-shaped gouge. She held the spear below her right arm, stood tall with her arms crossed, and raced forward like she was sliding along ice on her toes.

In the span of a breath, she filled two hundred meters of the five hundred meter distance. But...

“Those were homing arrows!”

After Asama’s shout, the twenty arrows turned around to continue their pursuit of the enemy. With bursting fragments of ether light, they seemed to ricochet to continue their flight with almost no loss of speed.

From above and below, the arrows raced along the gouge in the road. They accelerated through the air on the left and right as they pursued the enemy.

She can’t dodge, concluded Asama. That Caled-whatever spear acted as a powerful thruster, but the basic principle was the same as a Technohexen broom. The acceleration was continuous, so it could not make instantaneous direction changes.

Accelerating forward was the only way to avoid the arrows, but...

“Mito! Squish her with a counter! Then we’ll win!”

“Are you sure you’re not confusing our enemy with those drinking snacks you squish *on* the counter?”

“N-no! Those are more of a ‘tap, tap, tap, tap, splat’!!”

“The enemy is here!!”

Oh, right, thought Asama while looking back to the road. She saw light on the east end of the destroyed road. It was the bluish-white ether light of acceleration, but it did not come from the spear held under the enemy’s arm.

The enemy had uncrossed her arms, reached her left hand behind her, and pulled something out.

...A second one!?

This half-sickle spear had the opposite shape and the enemy swung it around.

“Finish this.”

This new blast of acceleration light allowed the enemy to spin and leap diagonally upwards.

In a single bound, she reached the rooftops on the right from Asama’s perspective.

Her blonde hair spun around as she moved.

She was currently at an elevated position. The road was to her right and a series of roofs continued ahead and behind her.

She had jumped up onto the rooftops lining the left side of the road.

Arrows trailing light flew toward her from back and to the right.

They were moving quickly enough to catch up, but her target was about three hundred meters away. She needed to arrive there safely.

So she pulled the right half-sickle from below her right arm and she kept the left one in her hand.

“Now, then.”

As the arrows approached, she activated the acceleration of her right spear.

“Right.”

It was directed toward the sky to her right.

She used her feet as they kicked off the rooftops, her rotating body, her swinging head, and the half acceleration from her right spear. She seemed to be falling into the sky to her right, but just as the arrow tips were reaching her feet...

“Left!”

She stopped the right and thrust the left spear tip backwards with her other hand, but not to attack. The bottom of the spear was pointed forward on her left and it fired acceleration light.

“...!”

Her body was swung around by the left spear, providing a high-speed midair rotation. She faced backwards, but she used the continuing rotation to snap her right spear up from below.

She hit one of the pursuing arrows and it flew off course like a fish leaping from the water. When the arrow in the lead lost power, two behind it collided with it, as if telling it to get moving.

The power burst. The impact between the three was small, but five spell sign frames opened. They each accelerated and shattered in turn.

<Impact pressure for training: Activate: Confirmed>

They seemed to be for training, so a loud sound and bright light signaled the hit. The light instantly drew a ring and two identical sounds echoed off the surrounding buildings and ground.

But this did not obstruct the seventeen following from behind. They colored their path with light and drowned out the residual noise of the previous impact as they pursued her.

“Come to me!”

She moved as if collapsing into bed, but she was no longer trying to dodge. She intended to intercept the pursuing arrows by letting them reach her.

They arrived.

She made a leap when her feet briefly landed on the rooftops lining either side of the road. Her entire body reflexively granted her a great rotating leap. Her head turned back to view her target up ahead and she used alternating accelerations from her two spears to leap back and forth between the rooftops on the left and right.

“———!”

Her great speed left afterimages behind.

Like a shadow, she could briefly be seen leaping between the two sides as well as changing direction in midair.

But her fundamental action was leaping back and forth between the right and left rooftops.

The repeated sounds of her spear acceleration pierced the air. It began sounding like the pulsating cry of a musical instrument. And within it were the roars of bursting impacts.

When turning atop the right rooftops, she struck three of the arrows with her left spear.

She leaped, evaded, guided the arrows to the left, swung her right spear to hit two more, and then continued forward. As she let them catch up and then struck them, two additional destructive crashes washed across the sky and the earth.

That sound pushed her onward.

She continued moving as she leaped, but she did not fail to keep an eye on what lay ahead.

She simply leaped back and forth while letting the arrows slip below her arms, between her legs, or under her chin. If they revealed their arrowhead to her, she would knock them away. If they showed their lower surface to her, she would kick them upwards. She continued causing them to explode three at a time, but she made forward progress all the while.

“...!”

As she swept aside the approaching arrows, she intentionally let their explosive blast reach her in order to add to her body’s rotation. And finally...

“This will end it!”

She took a great leap. She bent her body back, pointing her stomach to the sky, and made an overhead downward kick on one arrow to cause the remaining three to explode. This caused the greatest noise yet, but she landed on the gouged road as the wind and sound washed over her.

As soon as three rings of light spread in the sky, she raised her head and faced forward. She was within fifty meters of her target, but she did not hesitate to bring light to the ends of her double spears.

“Finish this, Caledfwlch!”

The instant she accelerated, something arrived right in front of her.

It was a transport ship.

It hit before she could possibly evade.

Chapter 28: Future Opponents

第二十八章

『将来の相対者』

来たる影の火元
いつか来る未来
天上の下に呼んでくれた
聖なる譜面の住人
配点（邂逅）



The source of a coming shadow

An inevitable future

The residents of the holy musical text

Which called us down from heaven

Point Allocation (Encounter)

The transport ship Mitotsudaira had thrown down onto the road was a small one. It was seven meters wide, thirty meters long, and meant to transport people and wooden containers.

It was one of Mitostudaira's privately owned ships as the ruler of this land and it had been waiting over the land port in order to carry them from the city of Mito to their diplomatic ship.

...But we didn't have time to evacuate!

The enemy's mobility and combat ability had prevented them from easily leaving on the transport ship. She might have made it herself, but she would have needed to bring Masazumi and her king with her. So...

"Take that!!"

As the ship flew in, she had grabbed it with her silver chains and thrown it.

The ship's trajectory had been shifted downward and it slammed into the ground ahead of her, seemingly using the V-shaped gouge as a guide.

The accuracy of that guidance allowed the ship to immediately begin sliding along the road.

The enemy was fifty meters away, but that was only an instant for the thirty meter ship. The enemy's forward acceleration also helped.

"I'm going to squish her with a counter, just like you wanted, Tomo!"

"That wasn't what I wanted! It was just a suggestion! A suggestion!"

Tomo seemed to have reached her crazy time of day. She seemed to have had a lot of those today, so Mitotsudaira did not bother listening.

The ship tore up the dirt and wore down the road as it shot forward for...

“A direct hit on the enemy!”

Immediately, the transport ship was bisected.

It was sliced through starting from the other side.

...What!?

Asama watched the instantaneous destruction from behind Mitotsudaira and she saw a giant blade of light.

Beyond the intense sounds of tearing materials, the enemy was thrusting a ten meter long single-edged sword of light their way.

...Is that...?

It was not a spear. The enemy’s right hand held what had looked a spear, but it had taken on a new form after emitting this blade of light.

A sword of light was sent forth from the inner edges of the straight blade and the half-sickle.

It was not a spear. The blades themselves were an emitter for a giant sword and the rest was a thruster.

The enemy had thrust that giant single-edged blade forward.

“...!”

As a result, the transport ship was sliced in two as it slid.

The enemy was preparing to move forward. The two halves of the transport ship were racing by on either side of her. Fragments of stone and dirt were scattering and pieces of ship materials were flying.

She pushed her right blade of light forward while activating her left thruster behind her. She was about to use the pressurization of a spell sign frame to launch herself forward, but...

“...!?”

The blade of light she held forward was broken in two from the tip.

The light scattered, the thick glowing blade split into a top and bottom half, and it shattered into nothingness.

She quickly realized why.

“Ex. Collbrande!”

Her opponent stood at the back of the split transport ship’s port side. From her perspective, that was on the right.

It was Musashi’s silver-haired 5th Special Duty Officer. The girl had used her silver chains to pull herself to the ship’s back hull and had made a full swing of Ex. Collbrande. When throwing the ship, she had likely not released her silver chain’s grip, thus pulling her along with it. From behind the ship, she had destroyed her enemy’s attack while also making an attack of her own.

“Well done!”

After that praise from the enemy, the sword of English royalty lent all its power to this trusted knight. The blade sliced through the sword of light even as the enemy further fueled her attack.

The blade swung through at precisely waist height. The wreckage of the ship created valley walls on either side, so she could not escape to the sides or down. So...

“Finish this, Caledfwlch!”

The residents of Mito saw two people within the wreckage of the transport ship rapidly moving down the road.

One was a blonde girl in an M.H.R.R. uniform with blue armor who jumped up from between the wreckage.

The other was...

“Our lord!”

Everyone watched as silver hair made an almost casual leap toward the starboard wreckage of the ship. She made sure to spin around in midair and bow

toward the residents. They cheered as she landed on the sliding wreckage.

“...!”

She immediately gained a burst of speed.

Asama listened to the wind while watching Mitotsudaira raise her speed atop the transport ship moving further and further away.

...This sound...

It was a sharp sound like some distant object approaching in a straight line.

...Is that a high-speed acceleration spell!?

But from where? she wondered just as some wind arrived behind her.

It was a person. An unfamiliar girl had run up from behind her. She seemed to be holding a spear, but she was moving too quickly to tell for sure.

“Eh?”

By the time Asama noticed her, the wind, the unfamiliar girl, and everything else vanished.

...Ehh!? She disappeared? But she was just here!

It was all so sudden. The previous sound of wind, the wind blowing in from behind, and the girl were nowhere to be found. She activated her Konoha false eye, but its tracking function could not decide where to target.

...Um. That wasn't some unexplainable phenomenon, was it?

As Asama wondered what was going on, Horizon faced her.

“Is that what you are looking for?”

Horizon pointed to their right where an alleyway led to a lumber storehouse. Asama looked at it, wondering why Horizon would be pointing it out.

“...!?”

Then it exploded and countless pieces of lumber flew several meters up into the sky.

Two figures also flew up into the air.

One was a spear-wielding girl wearing an M.H.R.R. girl's uniform without a coat.

And the other...

"Futayo!?"

It was Futayo. She held the Tonbo Spare in her right hand, held a thin magazine in her left hand, and flew through the sky.

She kicked off the airborne lumber to rotate around and control her body.

She already had her spear in hand and was ready to fight.

Futayo flew through the air thanks to the explosion caused by their clash.

She had not been caught in the explosion by choice.

An enemy in an M.H.R.R. girl's uniform had been moving toward Masazumi and the others, so she had made an attack. But...

...Did she block it with her spear?

She thought that was probably it. The "probably" was due to the explosion that had occurred at the same moment.

She did not understand how it worked, but she and the enemy were both flying through the air with fragments of the storehouse and its lumber.

"Hah!"

At almost the exact same time, she and the enemy kicked off the airborne lumber to leap downwards.

They both landed on the rows of rooftops.

They were approximately twelve meters apart.

Futayo thought while preparing for her next move.

She knew there were two enemies. She also knew she was dealing with one while Mitotsudaira dealt with the other. But...

...I wonder.

Am I a coward? she asked deep in her gut.

But, she also thought. The enemy matters more at the moment. Whether a coward or not, the Vice Chancellor must defeat any outside enemy.

There were five others down the road: Masazumi, Asama, Princess Horizon, the idiot, and Kimi. She was worried, but...

...Masazumi has good judgment and Asama-dono can handle defense. The nudist doesn't matter.

Then they should be fine, she thought just as a downpour of noise reached her.

The flying lumber was falling across the town like bolts of lightning. And...

...Above!

From above and behind a nearby piece of lumber, a sudden silver light pierced the center of her vision.

It was a spear. The enemy had jumped over the lumber and thrust her weapon down at Futayo.

"...!"

...Honestly.

Maybe I am a coward, she thought while deflecting the enemy's attack with her spear.

The sharp attack held enough strength to wake her up and remind her of something.

...She too is powerful!

The world is a large place, she thought while asking a question.

"I am Musashi Ariadust Academy Vice Chancellor Honda Futayo! Who are you!?"

...Oh.

Oops, she thought. *I was so overjoyed to meet such a formidable foe that I*

accidentally called out to her.

However, her question sent a tremor through the enemy's body. But it was not a tremor of confusion. She seemed to be gathering her strength to bear with something and correct herself.

“Testament!”

The enemy turned a powerful gaze toward Futayo.

“I am Fukushima Masanori of A.H.R.S. and #1 of Hashiba's Ten Spears!!”

The enemy, Fukushima, approached while yelling.

“Honda Futayo! It is my duty to defeat thee with this spear, Ichinotani!”



加藤・清正

...Hashiba's Ten Spears!?

Mitotsudaira had heard Futayo's opponent name herself.

So as she jumped atop the transport ship, she belatedly asked the same of her opponent who wielded Caledfwlch.

"Who are you!? Nate Mitotsudaira, Knight of Musashi, wishes to know!"

"Testament! Then I shall answer!"

The enemy had moved back to the bow of the ship and she loudly named herself while swinging Caledfwlch.

"I am Katou Kiyomasa of A.H.R.S. and #2 of Hashiba's Ten Spears!! Ruler of Mito! The blood of Hexagone Française runs in your veins, so facing you is one of my tasks!"

Her blonde hair whipped in the wind as she spoke.

"Let us fight!"

Mitotsudaira had no choice but to agree, so she poured speed into her body and charged forward.

Masazumi heard the enemies name themselves as she viewed the distant battle rising from the city like a pillar.

She knew the names Fukushima Masanori and Katou Kiyomasa from the Testament descriptions.

...So they're with Hashiba!!

That meant Hashiba's subordinates had come to the Mito land instead of Hashiba herself.

The Aoi Sister laughed while viewing the clothes from the tailor's.

"Heh heh. You understand, don't you? That Hashiba monkey girl doesn't live to the creation of this Mito land, so her helpful followers showed up in her place. Such wonderful love between master and servant. It's an adult relationship that must be incomprehensible to you children who think a relationship has to be romantic in nature if it reaches the level of sex! Now, what do you call that kind

of physical relationship in English!? Asama!”

“Eh!? Ehh!? U-um...i-is it ‘Free-...”

“Sometimes you say things that shock even me...”

“Asama-sama, five of Hanami-sama’s impurity meters just filled up in two seconds.”

Wouldn’t that be called “deep human relations”? answered Masazumi in her heart.

She faced forward where Mitotsudaira and Katou Kiyomasa confronted each other on the bisected ship sliding eastward.

On the deck of the port wreckage, the silver wolf accelerated toward the twin spear user.

After naming themselves, the time for battle had begun anew.

As Mitotsudaira repeatedly accelerated, she saw Kiyomasa prepare her weapons.

Of her twin spears named Caledfwlch, she stored one on her back and prepared the right one for their confrontation.

Mitotsudaira did not mind, so she launched her entire body forward.

She moved diagonally right, diagonally left, diagonally right, straight ahead, diagonally right, and then diagonally left, which placed her...

“Right in front of you.”

She snapped Ex. Collbrande’s blade forward.

It was a burst-like attack, but...

“Hah.”

Kiyomasa swung Caledfwlch, which deflected it upwards with a metallic sound.

The burning metal smell of the scraping blades raced through the wind of the sliding ship.

Mitotsudaira’s right arm was pulled up by Excalibur and the enemy sent her

spear tip in toward her right side.

It was a sharp blow. It would perfectly stab horizontally into her chest with the diagonal half-sickle blade.

A horizontal attack from straight ahead was not a good thing. After all...

Wise Sister: “You can’t, Mitotsudaira! Flat Chest Evasion won’t work on that attack! You need the Giant Breasts Defense!”

When did that get an official name? briefly wondered Mitotsudaira, but then she made a split-second decision.

She let go of Excalibur.

However, she did more than just that. She raised her opened hand even higher than the sword’s hilt.

“...!”

She made a downward burst. She snapped her shoulder, elbow, and wrist like a whip to send them straight down.

That high-speed snapping motion was something her mother had done before.

During their conformation on the hill near Magdeburg, her mother had used a short-distance snap to accelerate her hand and hold down Mitotsudaira’s rising head.

This was the same. Except she was not holding something down. She grabbed at something with her reversed wrist.

...Ex. Collbrande!

She grabbed it between her index and middle finger rather than in her palm. And instead of swinging it, she pulled it straight down.

Ex. Collbrande now stood like a pillar in front and to the right of her and the half-sickle blade caught on it.

There was a solid sound and sparks flew.

But Kiyomasa’s movements did not let up in the wind. She pulled the spear back with her full body and raised her heels to stand on her toes. She likely intended to exchange blows while using careful footwork. Something bothered

Mitotsudaira a little, but...

...I will settle this immediately!

Mitotsudaira turned her right side toward the enemy. As Ex. Collbrande rapidly spun around, she raised it vertically between her fingers.

As her left shoulder rotated behind her, she lifted that arm and let her wrist relax like the raised head of a snake.

This was the thrusting stance in the traditional fencing of Hexagone Française knights.

She then brought her raised left hand to her face and bit the glove.

“—————”

With a snap of her neck, she threw the glove between the two of them.

She had now officially challenged her opponent to a duel.

Kiyomasa nodded and thrust her spear forward.

Mitotsudaira immediately let go of Excalibur's hilt.

“Debut!!”

She used a sequence of snapping movements of her wrist and elbow to make a series of high-speed thrusts.

Chapter 29: Runner on Unstable Footing

第二十九章

『不安定足場の疾走者』



何処へ行こう
決めてはいるのだけど
配点（逡巡）

Where should I go?

Even if I have already made up my mind.

Point Allocation (Hesitation)

Silver and blue clashed on the sliding transport ship.

Mitotsudaira let go of the hilt while keeping her side turned to her opponent.

Kiyomasa attacked while holding her spear near the front, falling back, and focusing on defense.

Sparks flew, the clashing metal rang out, and their movements pushed at and deflected each other.

The spear seemed to be pushed back, but its frequency of attacks did not let up. That was partially due to the focus on defense, but it also had to do with the footwork circling around to Mitotsudaira's side.

Mitotsudaira, meanwhile, had people behind her she needed to protect. The longer the ship slid, the further they moved from her king and the others, but this enemy had tremendous mobility.

If she slipped past Mitotsudaira, it would be difficult to catch up. So while Kiyomasa protected herself yet attacked, Mitotsudaira had to continually attack while protecting the area behind her.

Their respective goals led them to a head-on clash.

“...!”

On the bisected deck, one of them circled around with her footwork and the other used snapping motions to take the necessary positions.

The sparks of clashing swords drew arcs between them and countless metallic sounds blossomed without end.

They both accelerated, poured directionality into their bodies, and yet...

“...Rrr!”

Mitotsudaira pushed her body forward. Before, she had been shifting her

position to more easily avoid Kiyomasa's attacks, but now she leaned forward to make a powerful attack of her own. And...

"Grr."

She bared her canine teeth and took that first clear step forward.

She charged and the sounds of weapons clashing reached her from the distance.

...Futayo!

Musashi had experienced a defeat, but their main force was finally able to exchange attacks with Hashiba's main force. So...

"Futayo! We must stop the enemy here!"

...True enough!

Futayo agreed with Mitotsudaira's shouted comment as she fought Fukushima.

Atop the town and on the rooftops, they both ran between the pillars rising like obstacles and they exchanged the sparks of attacks.

She is a superb enemy, thought Futayo. She has an excellent attack style.

She felt a bit like that they fit together well.

She was a girl and her enemy was a girl. She had a ponytail and her enemy had a ponytail. She used a spear and her enemy used a spear. Both those spears had a name: Tonbo Spare and Ichinotani. And...

"You are a decent fighter!"

"As are thee!"

...And we both have old-fashioned speech patterns!

That is a surprise. Some, like our ninja, do it because they would be too forgettable otherwise, but that isn't the case here. She does it because she is a samurai. Such a rare thing.

"Futayo!! Don't zone out!!"

Huh?

Futayo looked toward Masazumi who had shouted at her from the distance.

“I was not zoning out, Masazumi. I was only so lost in thought that I stopped focusing on my surroundings.”

“Just face forward!!”

She did as she was told.

...Oh, the enemy is attacking.

Masazumi looked to the right where the battle was being fought south of her.

On a rooftop about fifty meters away, Fukushima was swinging forward the spear named Ichinotani. It was a one-handed strike using a rotation of her upper body. The irregular method focused on reach and intensity.

Futayo, however, seemed distracted.

...Don't tell me it hit her!?

But Futayo was no longer along the path of Fukushima's spear.

Masazumi thought maybe she had been knocked away, but then she felt a tap on her shoulder from behind.

“Do not worry.”

“Eh?”

She looked back and saw Futayo's hair flowing in from ahead. However, it immediately bent and seemed to leap forward.

“———!”

Something like a chilly wind raced down the road and toward the enemy.

Futayo moved forward.

The running approach to Fukushima was long, so...

...I can make it!

Soaring Wings, her acceleration spell, used cumulative acceleration, so the length of her running approach determined her speed.

Fukushima had just swung her spear with her entire body. The right-handed jab had held the spear toward the bottom to gain the greatest reach.

But it was full of openings. One-handed attacks generally lacked strength and took longer to pull back, so they were discouraged. But this girl had used one anyway.

...In order to strike me!

She is wide open.

Futayo made a leap at thirty meters from Fukushima. There was a shop along the alleyway. It was a windy alleyway and there was a cooper's shop on the right. Some buckets were piled up like steps, so she used them as a stepping stone.

"Soaring Wings!"

The spell sign frame that appeared in front of her leg eliminated everything obstructing her acceleration.

She leaped.

She covered seven meters in a single step and launched herself onto a rooftop on the right. She activated Soaring Wings and cleared ten meters with her second step. She used Soaring Wings again to cover another fourteen meters with her third step.

...Mh?

Futayo realized she had jumped too far.

Fukushima seemed to have expected her to charge in with her spear, so the girl had given up on pulling back her own spear. She had let go of the shaft and ducked down to dodge, but...

"Eh!?"

Futayo saw her opponent's mouth fall open in surprise.

"Oh?"

Due to jumping too far, Futayo flew in knee-first.

Futayo used her motion to slam her right knee toward her enemy.

She bent her body back to make a midair knee attack.

She aimed for Fukushima's face. She adjusted the twist of her body to move behind the spear and pursue the girl.

She sent her knee out, but she only heard the flapping of a summer uniform skirt, and...

...She vanished!?

Fukushima was gone. No, she had leaped.

"To the right!"

It was the spear. After letting go of the spear, she had grabbed it again and pulled on it. Using it like a floating railing, she had stood up and moved to the right.

Futayo sensed Fukushima's skill in her willingness to turn her back like that. After all, Futayo could not swing the Tonbo Spare in her current position. Using her full strength to move away was the better choice here than falling back while keeping an eye on Futayo. Also...

...Is that an acceleration spell!?

Fukushima was not just running away. After using the spear to gain some initial speed, she had activated an acceleration spell to move forward. She held Ichinotani below her right arm and made a small leap.

"Headfirst Fall!!"

As the acceleration spell's name suggested, the enemy clearly fell.

Futayo saw that acceleration, but...

...Fall?

It started slow. She almost seemed to be floating, but a moment later...

...She's falling forward!?

Futayo saw a weak but definite acceleration like the floor had been removed.

Fukushima grabbed her spear and fell forward.

It was a gradual acceleration that almost made Futayo think she could reach out and grab her, but...

“That is being naïve!”

Futayo thrust her avoided knee forward and made a leftward half-rotation in midair. She reached her left arm back for a backhand blow that would knock aside the bottom of the enemy’s spear.

She reached it.

Her plan was to catch at it with both her fingers and her fingernails to brush aside Ichinotani.

...This should make it in time!

She hit, her fingers caught on it, and she did indeed deflect it.

She spun it around.

The deflected spear spun Fukushima’s body, affecting her stance.

This will work, thought Futayo.

Shinto acceleration spells were generally cumulative, but if the accumulated acceleration was not maintained, the spell would break and the acceleration would be lost. At best, the user would slow down. At worst, they would be sent flying through the air.

She had just altered Fukushima’s stance, so...

...She should slow down or fall over!

However, Futayo saw her enemy calmly continue accelerating.

“What?”

Futayo saw a blue sign frame below the enemy’s feet.

It displayed the name Headfirst Fall.

Despite Fukushima's stance being thrown off, it did not vanish or shatter.

It was working just fine.

Strange, thought Futayo. *That shouldn't be.*

"Headfirst Fall!"

Fukushima's voice rang out again and she made another leap. This time, she moved behind Futayo.

Futayo understood what kind of acceleration spell system Headfirst Fall used.

...It really does use the act of falling!

Falling began slowly and accelerated from there, but the acceleration itself was occurring from the very beginning.

That meant the directional control for its acceleration did not occur when the speed was rising.

...Does she control her next direction of movement from the moment of the slower initial acceleration!?

Any later interference would be corrected by the already controlled acceleration. Even if her stance was thrown off, the already promised acceleration would forcibly regather her body.

The vague acceleration of "falling" was likely a way of more easily controlling her movement if any interference occurred.

And currently, Fukushima was falling behind Futayo.

She had already turned the rectangular tip of Ichinotani toward her opponent.

"...!"

Suddenly, she fired her spear.

She did not throw it.

...An extension mechanism!?

The tip moved more than nine meters out.

Futayo's decision was based more on prediction than reaction.

While holding the Tonbo Spare below her right arm, she pointed the bottom of the spear behind her.

...Will this make it in time!?

She fired the extension mechanism straight out. She was not aiming for the roof because that would take too long. Her target was the tip of Ichinotani.

...Hit!

It hit.

Sparks flew, a sound of collision burst out, and both the recoil and slight variation in spear positions caused Futayo to fly through the air.

Masazumi saw Futayo leap high into the air.

...Oh.

She flipped around and found her footing.

Her footing was one of the wooden pillars sticking up throughout the town. She placed her feet on the side of the pillar rather than the top. With her body parallel to the ground, she used Soaring Wings without building up her strength.

...Ohhh.

Futayo made an accelerated leap as if to soar above Masazumi's admiration and over the enemy's head.

"She's using the pillars!"

Masazumi saw Futayo jumping between the sides of the countless wooden pillars.

Soaring Wings had not come to an end as Futayo ran with her body parallel to the ground.

She used the pillars as footing to keep up the cumulative acceleration of Soaring Wings.

...I just have to keep it going!

She was building up her speed.

She chose to leap between the pillars and to run.

She stood perpendicular from the sides of the pillars, making her parallel to the ground. As if using wooden stairs, she accelerated step after step with her motion taking her either forward and up or forward and down.

By the time she had circled around Fukushima, the force pressing down from her feet had stabilized and she stood up. Then she made a leap.

“...!”

She used the extension mechanism so sweep the Tonbo Spare’s tip toward Fukushima.

She sliced the wind, but Fukushima had already returned her spear’s extension mechanism to normal.

...Here she comes.

Already, Fukushima had “fallen” upwards. She moved to the top of one of the pillars and stood vertically there. But while she was at the top, Futayo was on the side.

“Let us do this.”

Fukushima pursued her. Futayo had more speed from Soaring Wings’s cumulative acceleration, but...

“Headfirst Fall!”

From her very first step, Fukushima “fell” along the shortest path from pillar to pillar in pursuit of Futayo.

She was coming.

One of Futayo’s steps was the same as five of hers. One of Futayo’s steps was the same as four of hers. One of Futayo’s steps was the same as three of hers. Then their paths intersected.

They attacked at almost the exact same moment.

Fukushima struck much like stabbing at a fish below the water's surface and Futayo jabbed to the side while running. Their attacks collided and sparks flew.

“Oh!”

One of Futayo's steps was the same as two of hers. When their attacks coincided again, their steps were equal.

“Ohhh!!”

Futayo leaped while still under pursuit.

She accelerated.

The two girls pursued each other in curving trajectories on the top or the side of the wooden pillars rising from the town.

The pillars were about twenty centimeters thick. Futayo would kick off their sides to jump forward while Fukushima would kick off their tops to fall forward. Futayo stretched forward with acceleration and sent her spear backwards while Fukushima used the wobbling in the instant of falling to evade and used the force of the fall to make a counterattack with her spear.

They moved closer and further apart, but they never moved more than a half step away from each other.

Fukushima aimed at Futayo's legs from above. She held her spear toward the front and attacked at the area from the back of Futayo's knees to her Achilles tendon.

Futayo aimed for Fukushima's gut from below.

Futayo would change the position of her feet on the sides of the pillars and would occasionally make a great leap.

“Toh!”

After landing three pillars down, she would accelerate again.

After throwing off her tempo, Futayo would make a counterattack thrust, but Fukushima would respond.

“Oh!”

She would use her Headfirst Fall and twist her body to evade. And occasionally...

“———!”

They would target each other's face or arm to throw off their movement. To evade, Futayo would run to the top of the pillar and Fukushima would shift her position to the side of the pillar.

As the process repeated, their speed continued to grow.

“Here I go!”

Fukushima moved down to the side of the pillars to line up alongside Futayo. Futayo ran along left side of the pillars and Fukushima along the right side. They would send their spears straight down toward each other, sweep them horizontally at each other as they stood back up, and make simultaneous leaps.

“Toh.”

Futayo landed on the pillar first and Fukushima landed afterwards. The next time they landed, they had swapped their right and left positions, but...

“I have caught up!” announced Fukushima.

As if jumping down from the top of the pillar, she had circled to Futayo's opposite side as Futayo ran toward the right side.

Side by side, they kicked off the side of the pillar.

“Ohhhh!”

Sparks flew and they crossed paths.

Chapter 30: Reversers with Swift Footing

第三十章

『急ぎ足場の返し手達』



巻き返すなら
ひっくり返せ
引き返せ
配点/(ぎりぎり)

If you wish to reverse the momentum

Then overturn it all

And turn back

Point Allocation (Just Barely)

Futayo leaped through the air. She used each swift step to fill the gap between pillars and launched herself forward.

Similarly, her enemy Fukushima fell horizontally. She flipped her body around in a never-ending fall that dropped her horizontally between pillars with a set tempo.

When Futayo attacked, Fukushima would block it. When Fukushima attacked, Futayo would block it. They both held their spears near the front, used their footwork to rotate their bodies even as they continued forward, and leaped through the town's sky as their paths intersected.

To Futayo, Fukushima seemed wholly focused on her movements.

...She must have desired this battle.

Futayo also thought about what Fukushima had said before.

...Her duty is to defeat me.

Was that in reference to this battle alone? If not, she had likely desired this confrontation for a long time and thoroughly trained for it.

"But..."

Futayo did not know this opponent. This was her first time seeing Fukushima.

During the Battle of Mikatagahara, she would have been on the Azuchi Castle with Hashiba, but Futayo had been too focused on Hashiba.

...So who were the other nine?

She did not remember and that lack of memory brought a new thought to mind.

...How careless can I be?

No, she thought while dodging an attack and making one of her own as if pushing the spear tip forward with her fingers.

...Haven't I been careless far too often lately?

In the past, it had only been about three times a day, but she was already up to two today. Her pace was clearly increasing. In the past few days, she had experienced early morning carelessness and returning home carelessness, which both seemed to be a type of chronic carelessness.

I can only allow myself to be careless three times a day, she told herself.

“...Oh!?”

Fukushima's attack was approaching before her eyes, so she quickly dodged. She only had to move her head to avoid it, but that was due to Fukushima's extreme accuracy, not good luck.

She has accurate and precise movements, judged Futayo.

Her footwork to change Headfirst Fall's direction, her bodily control when falling, and her attacks were all straightforward.

Then, thought Futayo.

...What does that say about her feelings toward defeating me?

Futayo kicked off a pillar and heard a voice.

“Kh...”

It sounded like a groan of anguish, frustration, and anger.

...?

Just as she wondered why her enemy would produce a voice like that, that enemy hung her head and fell. Her raised spear hid her expression, so Futayo could only hear her voice.

“Honda Futayo-sama!”

Futayo was confused. She could not figure out why Fukushima would use the respectful ‘sama’ honorific. But Fukushima continued the very next moment.

“Does thou not intend to fight seriously against the likes of me!?”

Futayo briefly found herself unable to grasp what that question meant.

...Do I not intend to fight seriously?

Against who? The opponent before her obviously.

And who was it directed toward? Toward her, the one exchanging attacks with that opponent, of course. Then...

“—————”

Oh, no, she thought.

...Of course I do...

She had accepted that Fukushima was powerful and she understood that Fukushima had a reason to fight her.

She viewed her as an enemy, but according to Fukushima...

“What is the meaning of these sorry excuses for attacks!?”

Futayo felt her body freeze up as the enemy kicked off a pillar toward her.

This isn't good, Futayo said in her heart.

Sorry, she also said in her heart.

She suddenly remembered the previous evening when she had tried to follow Muneshige in climbing the outer hull.

...But then...

She was a coward.

There had been something in her heart that kept her from doing it and she had failed.

She had been a coward.

If she could not focus on herself and made mistakes for unclear reasons, could she really take control of a confrontation with someone else? Even if she stood on that stage, fighting with her cowardly body would defile the official battlefield.

This was not about winning or losing. As someone facing a battle and standing on the battlefield, was she or was she not pure?

Her cowardly heart would only defile the battlefield.

Muneshige had to have realized how cowardly she was the day before. That was why he had reached down toward her.

And what had she done then?

Had she reached back up in search of someone to save her?

She did not know and she spoke her next thought aloud.

“Well, even if I did, I should be able to focus myself for at least ten seconds.”

She decided not to think any further, twisted her upper body backwards, and used all her strength to make a counterattack against Fukushima.

Fukushima sensed something like a light.

Her opponent’s strength had sunk into the darkness and was not rising to the surface. Her enemy’s attacks had struck or swept aside her own, but they had not been fully developed into true attacks. Those were the spear strikes she had been blocking this entire time and that had spoken to her opponent’s cowardice, but...

...What is this?

Futayo’s attack seemed to glow. It was like a small light in the darkness, but it was still accurate and straightforward.

“———!?”

This attack was clearly extended differently from before.

Her opponent’s movements looked the same, but each of her joints was stretched just a little further toward Fukushima. Altogether, it provided an extra dozen centimeters of reach.

Beautiful, thought Fukushima. Fully stretching the body required not tensing up, but an attack needed a core of strength. Fukushima felt like she could see a line of strength providing the core of the attack and nothing else. Her opponent

was becoming one with her weapon and was specializing her movements for attack.

“This is more like it!”

Fukushima had jumped after Futayo, so she turned to the right in midair. Futayo’s spear was aimed a bit below her face. In other words, her throat. As it was near the face, she could not help but focus on it, but it was also difficult to grasp its exact position just by moving her eyes.

She needed to dodge on instinct without getting an accurate look.

Fukushima increased the speed of her spin. She tried to avoid the attack by what was closer to a cheek’s width than a full head’s width.

Her intent was to avoid her opponent’s counterattack and slam her body into that opponent. This was the greatest attack she could make using the speed of her fall. And to gain that power...

...I must dodge!!

She used her strength to rotate her body in midair and swing her legs.

“Tah!!”

She leaned back to dodge...or so she thought. Her opponent’s spear tip followed her movement and grazed her ear, but she still escaped harm. But...

...Eh?

Something changed in front of her eyes.

The wooden pillar they were going to use as their next foothold was collapsing in the opposite direction.

They were losing their next foothold.

Fukushima asked herself why their foothold was falling over. It was a sound that answered that question.

She heard a solid thunk. Her opponent had extended the bottom of her spear with its extension mechanism.

...And she struck the pillar while attacking me!?

The speed with which the pillar collapsed answered that question all too well.

The enemy was a bit ahead of Fukushima, so she would be able to use it as a foothold before it collapsed.

Fukushima however would not be able to.

She did not think of this as unfair. If she had been the one in the lead, she would probably have used the same method to disrupt her opponent.

This just meant the enemy had moved out ahead and been more skillful.

...Has her cowardice vanished for the moment!?

So she decided to respond in kind. To face the present danger and to thank her opponent by using her full strength and every method available to her, she removed the restrictions inside her.

She would win using her full strength and by any means necessary.

She then enacted a solution to the current problem.

Her left hand grabbed the spear she had just dodged.

She held it as if to steal the enemy's weapon.

She gripped the metal shaft near the tip. Immediately afterwards, she pulled in her left arm to launch herself forward. She also moved her right hand out from her chest for a one-handed strike with the spear held in those fingers.

She aimed for her enemy's throat. She moved her right shoulder forward and extended her forearm out from in front of her armpit.

"Ohhh!"

She used the extension mechanism.

Hit, she thought. She knew she had to keep that thought in mind for this to work, but then she saw something unexpected.

The enemy let go of her own spear.

The one-handed spear jab lost its balance a little and Futayo avoided it with a

swing of her head.

“Toh.”

She reached for the enemy’s spear. She grabbed the base of the blade and confirmed what she assumed to be the case.

Up ahead and past the enemy, the previous pillar they had used as a foothold was collapsing.

There was a simple reason.

...She used her extension mechanism to strike it with the back of her spear!

The enemy had not been attacking her. She had used the extension mechanism to hit that foothold and use the recoil to extend the distance of her leap.

She had made an immediate decision after seeing Futayo knock over their next foothold.

Well done, thought Futayo with the enemy’s spear in her hand.

A moment later, the enemy moved right in front of her.

They simultaneously landed on the collapsing and thus sloped pillar and they both held the other’s spear.

They were close enough to grab each other’s collars, but their positions on the sloped pillar drew a V-shape.

“Ohhh...!!”

“...Ohhh!!”

They both spun their spears around and exchanged blows while running toward the top of the toppling pillar.

Their racing attacks became an exchange of circular motions.

Futayo held the front end of Ichinotani and Fukushima held the front end of the Tonbo Spare. While holding each other’s weapon in that irregular fashion, they would strike each other, steal the other’s current weapon or have their own

taken. They seemed to be exchanging their weapons again and again.

One movement led into another as they ran.

One rotated their spear, creating a circle to sweep their enemy away, but the other would avoid the attack and pull on the front of the opponent's spear to take it away. After stealing the spear, they would spin it behind their back to swing it back around, creating a figure eight in all.

They seemed to be spinning and passing two batons between each other. The series of double figure eights whipped up the wind and would not end.

The air was split apart and the glittering of the metal decorated the sky, but they eventually reached the top of the pillar.

When they took that final step, they both had their own weapon back in their hands.

They rotated that weapon around their body and swept it toward their enemy with all their might.

The tips clashed between them.

When the two half-circles collided, sparks and a clashing noise burst from the center of the S-shape.

Their attacks did not reach their enemy. Only the clanging of metal filled the air as they shouted at each other.

“Bind...Tonbokiri!”

“Fall...Ichinotani!”

The instant each weapon's blade reflected their opponent, their battle was settled.

A moment later, Fukushima's silhouette crossed paths with Futayo's.

...Futayo!?

Mitotsudaira realized the distant sounds of a high-speed battle had stopped.

However, it had not ended on Futayo's attack.

What had happened? She was worried, but she was currently fighting her own enemy.

She continued to accelerate straight ahead, toward Kiyomasa.

...Here I go!!

She increased her speed. Instead of pulling back and shifting to the side, she bent her body forward and snapped her entire body to flexibly move forward and back while launching Excalibur.

“Rrrraah!”

With a bestial roar, she sent her entire body forward. The instantaneous movement of her legs caused her body to sway and she amplified the movement in her hips and spine. The recoil passed through her shoulder to her wrist and launched the blade.

She could only move like this after building up a certain level of speed and after warming up her body.

She did not reach the speeds of her battle with her mother, but the speed of each attack increased its weight.

...So I can push her back!!

To make that thought a reality, she did indeed push at Kiyomasa.

Kiyomasa reacted by moving her hand all the way to the front of her spear.

“Kh!”

The enemy had her hands full simply deflecting Mitotsudaira’s barrage, but the wolf did not let up. As if telling this enemy to move back but not to move out of the way, she moved in arcs to always drive the enemy toward the center and back. She was telling Kiyomasa to face her head-on even while retreating.

Wolves were said to follow people until they left the wolf’s territory.

The silver wolf took a new step and snapped her body forward.

She pushed onward as if bathing in the sparks she herself was creating.

“————”

But as soon as she made her snapping motion, Kiyomasa took a certain action.

She moved to Mitotsudaira's left. She jumped to the port wreckage as if to escape.

However, Mitotsudaira was already on the move. It was not so much a reflex as noticing the earliest hints of Kiyomasa's movement in the girl's defense.

"I won't let you get away!"

Just as Mitotsudaira jumped left, she saw something.

Kiyomasa was jumping to the right.

...Eh?

That was the opposite.

What just happened? wondered Mitotsudaira.

The enemy's defense and the movement afterwards had both shown her jumping left toward the port side of the bisected ship, but now Kiyomasa was clearly jumping to the right. She even performed a side flip in midair.

...Was that...!?

It was her spear.

As soon as Kiyomasa had jumped toward the port wreckage, she had slammed her spear against the edge of that wreckage.

The L-shaped blade had caught on the edge of the deck, providing a foothold.

"And she kicked herself back the other way!?"

Using her arm strength, back muscles, and balance, Kiyomasa had launched herself back the way she had come.

She made her leap with the resolve necessary to abandon the right half of Caledfwlch.

She had successfully stolen a moment of Mitotsudaira's time and moved a bit further away.

...Now the left one.

Kiyomasa must have decided she did not have time to draw the weapon. She kept Caledfwlch attached to her back hard point and moved her left hand to her back to operate it.

She had used the force of her leap to perform a side flip, so the downward pointing Caledfwlch also rotated to point Mitotsudaira's way.

Mitotsudaira saw light, but it was not a glowing blade.

It had reached the level of a cannon blast.

Kiyomasa twisted her side flip to give the attack a twisting sweeping motion.

"Finish this, Caledfwlch!!"

The sword-like and continuous blast of light flew toward Mitotsudaira.

It was going to score a direct hit before she could raise Excalibur again.

"I see. So Hashiba's troops have begun fighting Musashi's forces at Mito."

High in the sky, a voice spoke among a ruined field with long grass.

It was Marfa. She was mayor of the floating city of Novgorod and she was currently walking through a field on the city's south end. She used a path cut in the waist-high grass.

The log wall surrounding Novgorod and the deserted city were visible in the distance. She reached a hand out over the field while walking toward the city.

She plucked something.

"I see the wheat is growing on its own again this year. It's consumed by the excess grass and grows thinner, but wheat really doesn't exist for man's sake. It grows taller for its own survival, and that's why it grows thinner. ...Musashi, Sviet Rus, and the Oushuu forces are the same. Don't you think, Toby?"

"If not, then this world will not survive," said an elderly man standing behind Marfa. He bowed toward her before continuing. "Sviet Rus, Date, and Mogami are all moving to accept Musashi's diplomatic ships."

“Yes, none of them are trying to grow thinner for Musashi’s sake. ...But Toby, how are our preparations for our own guest coming along?”

“The western port is ready. They can land at any time.”

“Testament. We already have some visitors and I’ve heard some interesting things from them. ...Like why Novgorod exists and even some things not even I knew about.”

“About them...”

Toby seemed wary, so Marfa smiled a little.

“Do you really think you could defeat them? Having you finish each other off would be a waste, so don’t bother. These current guests will leave once the next guest arrives and there is no need to criticize someone who is leaving. Besides, I am the only one that needs to wait for someone who has already left,” said Marfa. “Now, how will history treat Novgorod? P.A. Oda and Nobunaga seemed to already be looking further ahead, but what will their opposites do?”

She faced forward toward the city’s log roofs and the rectangular stone city hall in the center.

“You know not the depths of history, the path of destiny, or the exchange of connections and wills that will determine everything.”

The city gate up ahead was open and a dimly-lit, deserted city lay beyond it, but Marfa continued walking with a smile.

“But, Musashi, can you discover the whole of those truths?”

Afterword

Sorry about the wait. Here is Kyoukai Senjou no Horizon Volume 4 Part A.

The setting shifts to Kantou and Tohoku, so the major players of Date, Mogami, and Uesugi are showing up. When you look at actual history, Mogami had the upper hand in their territorial struggles. Date and Uesugi were both manipulated by Mogami Yoshiaki who was known as a “fox”.

On the world side of things, Russia has shown up, but 16th century Russia had broken free of temporary Mongol rule and was beginning a rapid expansion under Ivan the Terrible. The surrounding nations were very worried, but England traded with them on good terms and Elizabeth was even sent letters telling her to stop trading with Russia. The surrounding nations were in a touchy situation with the Reformation and the expansion of the Ottoman Turks.

Anyway, the Far Eastern nations are also in a tricky situation along the Oushuu route. You’ll have to keep reading to find out what happens with all that. And now for the usual chat.

“Do you have any unpleasant memories from middle or high school?”

“Yes. In middle school, I smelled curry from a house on the way home. I started sniffing away, but then the door opened and the girl I liked at the time stepped out. My life was over right there.”

“Yeah, that impression would never go away... But the smell of dinner is a must-have when walking home from school.”

“I know, right? I remember hearing the sounds of frying, getting all excited that I might have something like that for dinner too, and then getting home to find nothing but a bag of Curls on the table.”

“Yeah, Curls aren’t fried. (That’s true.) But why Curls?”

“Well, both my parents worked. There was no one there to get mad at and I

didn't have any food, so I ended up watching Transformers and eating the Curls. I think I climbed a step toward adulthood that day. I never thought I'd grow up to be the kind of adult that eats Curls for dinner, but my parents must have known."

No, I don't think they did.

Anyway, the background music this time was Asian Kung-Fu Generation's Siren (there are two versions of the lyrics, but this was the proof of existence version). It can be the signal before a comeback.

The smoldering fire is slowly growing, but...

"Who was hiding the greatest fire?"

I'll leave it at that.

Now, Part B is coming next month, so wait just a little longer.

June 2011. A morning that's already hot.

-Kawakami Minoru

Notes

1. ↑ Rusu means “away from home”.
2. ↑ Means “Fog Clearer”.